

Administration of the Canadian West

SPEECH

OF

HON. CLIFFORD SIFTON,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1906

How the Country has benefited by the Contract with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company. Remarkable Success of the Government's Policy.
A Comparison with the Conservative Regime.

"I would go further and say that the very farthest thing from my intention or desire was to initiate and carry on a policy which would be in accord with the sentiments which hon. gentlemen opposite crystallised into action when they were in power. The policy of this government has been to carry on, so far as the land system is concerned, for the purpose, in the first place, of promoting the prosperity of the Western Country, in the second place of promoting the prosperity of the whole people of Canada, and in the third place for the purpose of pleasing the people of Western Canada with whom we had to deal. The men who are living in that western country, who are dealing with the land department, who are every day in familiar relations with the circumstances, have overwhelmingly given their endorsement to the administration of the affairs by this government."

Hon. CLIFFORD SIFTON (Brandon). Mr. Speaker, I have not, for a considerable length of time, obtruded myself upon the attention of the House, not having anything very special to say and being of the opinion that unnecessary verbosity does not conduce to the efficient transaction of business. But the circumstances of the present debate, will, I think, justify me in the opinion of my fellow members in presenting some extended remarks to the House upon the subject of this debate. Since my retirement from the government a little more than a year ago I have not taken a very active part in connection with the proceedings of the House or in connection with political affairs generally, and when the present session came around, having under my consideration private matters, which, if carried to the conclusion to which they seemed to tend, would, in all probability, result in my retirement from political life at a comparatively early date, I did not feel disposed to take a very active part in connection with the affairs of the House during the present session.

But my hon. friends upon the other side of the House, for reasons best known to themselves, have seen fit, apparently with

the object of bringing some political advantage to themselves, to discredit the administration of the department which I had the honour to have charge of for a number of years. That being the fact, Mr. Speaker, I consider it my imperative duty to let my hon. friends upon the other side of the House, as well as my hon. friends upon this side of the House, know that I am prepared to meet in debate upon the floor of this House any hon. gentleman who sees fit to impeach the transactions of the Department of the Interior while I was in charge of it.

A Fatuous Conservative Policy.

I do not imagine for myself that the anticipations which my hon. friends upon the other side of the House entertain as to political advantage from the course which they are pursuing this session respecting the Department of the Interior are likely to be realized. I do not profess to be a very good judge of political opinion in the eastern provinces, but I do profess to know something about political opinion in the western provinces, and I venture to say that the efforts of hon. gentlemen to discredit the Department of the Interior

and its administration during the last nine years in the minds of the people of the west will be shown in the end to be simply a continuation of the fatuous policy which has resulted in the absolute annihilation of the Conservative party in this western country for more than a decade. I can remember when there were no Liberals in the Northwest, or practically none, when, as a party, they were non-existent, and when, if half a dozen Liberals got together, they would debate whether it was safe for them to call themselves a Liberal association or not. Hon. gentlemen upon the other side of the House are quite as much responsible for the change which has taken place as we are. They contributed in one way to bring about that change when they were in office and I, in my humble way, endeavored to contribute in another way to bring about that change during the time I was in office.

Now, I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is somewhat refreshing to me to find, even at this late date, in the tenth year after I came to this House, that members take such a vital interest in the affairs of the west. I have brought down Bills to this House year after year relating to matters affecting the interests of the west and I have found it difficult to get a quorum to pass these Bills through. I have brought down my estimates year after year when full explanations were given about nearly all these matters that have been discussed this session, and I have found it sometimes difficult to get a quorum present to carry these estimates through. I am glad to know that interest in the west has revived; I am glad to know that a salutary interest is being taken in the affairs of the west, and I am bound to say that my opinion is that the more interest there is taken in the west the better it will be for the Liberal party, and the more the question is discussed the clearer it will be that the Department of the Interior is prepared to withstand any and all assaults that may be made upon it by gentlemen on the other side of the House.

The present Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) will pardon me if I seem for a little while to be somewhat usurping his position, because the attacks are mostly directed to actions of the department during the time I was in charge of it and before he became responsible for its administration.

Mountains of Information.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition has made a somewhat extended state-

ment of his views. The hon. gentlemen who comprise the opposition have during the present session received from the Department of the Interior (to use a somewhat historic expression), mountains of information. They have obtained from the department heaped up piles of documents of detailed information upon every conceivable subject with which the department has dealt during the last eight or nine years. I am bound to say that in a great many cases I had forgotten about these matters, and they have been recalled to my recollection here as things which have faded away into the dim and distant past and as things which in my innocence I did not regard as worthy of being called to the attention of parliament at this late date. The gentlemen of the opposition have got this information and they have devoted themselves to its study with praiseworthy assiduity and ingenuity. As a result of their efforts we have now the case which has been made by the leader of the opposition and by those of his followers who have spoken, and which we must regard as the case which they desire to have met by speakers on this side. It is a rule of all reasonable debate that when a resolution is moved by a parliamentary leader and he is followed by several of his political friends, that the statements they have made are assumed to be the case which they desire to go to the country.

The Dominion Lands Act.

My hon. friend (Mr. Borden) first of all dealt with changes in the law which governs the administration of the Interior Department and he particularly referred to changes in the Dominion Lands Act. He said that here a change had been made and there a change had been made and he stated that the general policy followed for some years past had been to increase the power of the minister and the power of the government. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that there has ever been any great secret about the amendments to the Dominion Lands Act. That Act cannot be amended by the minister and it cannot be amended by the government. The amendments to the Dominion Lands Act do not require to be called to the special attention of the House at this moment; they have been submitted to the House of Commons year after year and submitted by myself; reasons have been given and explanations have been made of the changes, and if the leader of the opposition will look through the records of the House of Commons for the past ten years I do not believe he will find a single division recorded

upon any amendment to the Dominion Lands Act. Surely under these circumstances it is rather late to come along and say there has been a vicious tendency running all through these amendments which year after year had received the unanimous approval of parliament, including of course our friends from the Conservative side.

Then we are told that in addition to these changes in the Lands Act there have been orders in council under which the Minister of the Interior has been given excessive authority, such as authority to reduce the price of land and to sell it at cheaper prices than have formerly prevailed. I do not desire to be at all supercilious, nor do I desire to assume credit for greater knowledge than my fellow-members, but when I hear discussions in connection with the affairs of the Northwest by gentlemen who have suddenly plunged into a book or two and then assumed authority to give the House information on the subject, I am a little disposed to smile. And so I was disposed to smile at my friend from Toronto (Mr. Bristol) last night when he produced this order in council as self-evident conclusive proof that there was something rotten in the administration of the Department of the Interior. That order in council was a very innocent affair indeed, and I will tell the House just why that order in council was passed.

A Department of Delay.

But first let me say that hon. gentlemen who were active in connection with political affairs prior to 1896 will remember the condition of the Department of the Interior under Conservative government, and they will bear me out when I say that the crying complaint was—and it is not a complaint that is confined to members of the Liberal party but a complaint which leading members of the Conservative party were just as loud in proclaiming—they will bear me out that the crying complaint was that the Department of the Interior was a department of delay, a department of circumlocution, a department in which people could not get business done, a department which tired men to death who undertook to get any business transacted with it. Under such circumstances, what was the policy I was bound to pursue in an effort to redeem the department from its well known condition?

They had in the city of Winnipeg what was known as the Land Board and which was supposed to decide all disputes in connection with land matters in the west. It

did not decide these disputes. When a decision of the Land Board was not satisfactory it was appealed to Ottawa; there was correspondence between the local office and the Land Board in Winnipeg; from the Land Board to the head office here; correspondence backwards and forwards and forwards and backwards until the men dealing with the matter would lose track of it altogether and there was piled up files in the department dealing with these disputes and nothing was done. I had to remedy that state of affairs. I had to get rid of all unnecessary circumlocution and try to put the department in a position to do business promptly and in a modern up-to-date kind of fashion. For that purpose I recommended the abolition of the Land Board. The office at Winnipeg was abolished, the administration was centralized at Ottawa, the commissioner of Dominion lands was put in an office within a short distance of my own: the late Mr. Burgess was appointed, and he filled the office of land commissioner until he died.

Prompt Decision of Details.

But the object was that there should be prompt and systematic administration, so that the man who felt aggrieved could have his case considered promptly by the commissioner and through the commissioner by the minister, and could get a decision in the shortest possible time. Take the changes in the law with respect to orders in council. There are hosts of matters arising constantly in the Department of the Interior about which council cannot know anything, and as to the details of which the minister himself can know very little. They come before the minister on the recommendation of his official; he takes the word of his official that the proper formalities have been complied with. The business of the department could not be carried on for a week if that were not done. What existed at that time was this. Many matters which came before the minister in a formal way on the recommendation of officials, as to which the minister himself could not know anything of the facts, had to go before council for the purpose of receiving the decision of council upon them. My colleagues said to me, why in the name of common sense are all these details brought here? Why cannot you decide them yourself? Amendments were made in the law in order to provide for the prompt decision of details which it was utterly absurd and unnecessary to bring before council, and for no other reason.

Settle the Land.

Somebody brought up the question of an order in council which was passed for the purpose of enabling the minister to reduce the price of land. I remember perfectly why that order in council was passed. One of the matters which had arisen in the province of Manitoba when I took office, and which was a very serious matter, which required to be dealt with by the department, was this. That province had been settled very largely by people who went in there in the early eighties. In 1896, when I was called to take office, this condition of affairs existed, that many men who had settled in that province in the early days had, by misfortune, by failure of their crops, or by some of the difficulties that overtake men in a new country, lost their farms, and the result was that many men in Manitoba and in some portion of the territories, had lost their farms, exhausted their rights to homestead entries, and were in this position, that unless something could be done for them, they would remain for the rest of their lives labouring men with no opportunity to acquire homes or to take up any portion of the public domain.

The view I took of such cases was this. I was satisfied then, as I am now, that no minister could safely bring in an amendment to the homestead law so as to extend the homestead privilege; but where I was satisfied that a man was deserving, who had exhausted his homestead right and wanted to get a farm for himself, I said, I will sell him the land at \$1 an acre. Then, there were cases where men had settled on very poor homesteads on which it was absolutely impossible for them to make a living; and to such men we sold the land at \$1 or \$1.50 an acre. The result of that policy is, that instead of some hundreds of men being practically outcast, unable to make homes for themselves, they are today on the land making prosperous homes for themselves. That is the reason the order in council was passed; and if you will look at the returns which have been made from time to time and laid on the table of this House, you will find whole lists of land granted to this man, that man, and the other man in lots of 160 acres, just enough to make homes for themselves and their families, and the price fixed at a low figure especially for the reason that the men in these conditions were the last in the world who could afford to pay a high price. As my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior said yesterday, I say that my policy was

never to get the highest possible price for the land. It was rather to settle the land, believing that was the best policy for promoting the prosperity of the country.

Question of Secrecy.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition said that the operations of the Department of the Interior had been shrouded in secrecy. Now, it may be strange observation to make; it may seem strange to him; but I do make this observation, that I have heard that from my hon. friend for the first time. I never knew before that the operations of the Department of the Interior were shrouded in secrecy to any greater extent than the operations of any other department of the government or to any extent that could in any way whatever be regarded as improper. When I took charge of the department, so far as giving out information was concerned, there were certain rules in force which I presume had always been in force ever since the department was organized. In the eight or nine years that I was in charge, I never, by intimation, direction, order or regulation, suggested to an official of the Department of the Interior to increase in any way the degree of secrecy that appertained to the business of the department; nor do I believe that my hon. friend the present Minister of the Interior has done so; I do not see why he should. If secrecy exists, it is precisely the same degree of secrecy that has existed ever since that department was organized, and the same degree that exists in every other department of the government. If it be important and urgent, as a matter of public policy, that a change should be made in that method of doing business, that is a fair ground of debate, but is no ground for impeaching the minister.

Favoritism Impossible.

In that connection my hon. friend made a suggestion which creates an impression which ought not to be created. He made the suggestion that, arising out of this secrecy, charges were made of this character; that, for instance, a prospector or some person lodging a claim in the Department of the Interior, I presume in regard to mineral land, it would hardly apply to anything else—would find after he had lodged his claim, that some person had lodged a prior claim; and the suggestion was that some official had caused the prior claim to be lodged ahead of that of the bona fide prospector. So far as my knowledge of the business of the Department of the Interior goes, I do not believe that it is pos-

sible that anything of that kind could happen. Applications come before the department in the regular way, in nineteen cases out of twenty—yes, in ninety-nine out of a hundred—by correspondence. The application comes in the shape of a letter. It goes to the registrar of correspondence, an official who I think has been in office for the last twenty or twenty-five years. The letter is registered in the book; it is docketed, is sent to the proper branch, is stamped, is put on the file and entered in the books. There are two, three, four or five men through whose hands that letter or application must pass, and every man has a record of it or puts a mark on it in some way. It is put on the file, and is sent to the responsible head of the branch. The responsible head of the branch dictates the answer to be sent, if it is not of a purely routine character.

Will any one tell me how, in the name of common sense, any person can go to work to get an application on that file ahead of the ones already there. If any one would undertake to do anything of that kind, everybody in the building would know it in five minutes. It could only be done through the conspiracy of a half dozen officials, and the very statement of the fact shows its impracticability.

Parliament Fully Informed.

Then my hon. friend possibly may have meant, when he spoke of the secrecy shrouding the operations of the department—but I do not think he could fairly have come to that conclusion—that there had been something in the nature of withholding information from parliament. I put myself in the judgment of members on both sides who have been here for the last ten years when I make this statement; that I do not believe any member of this House, or even my hon. friend himself, would say that while I was in charge of that department anybody ever asked me a question in this House, or asked me a question when my estimates were going through, or ever tried to get information in the shape of a return, that I did not do all in my power to answer promptly, fully, and quickly as possible. I put myself in the judgment of this House on both sides when I submit that whatever sins hon. gentlemen may think I have been guilty of, political or otherwise, that of withholding information from this House, when I was asked for it in a proper way, in accord with the rules of the House, is not one of them. I go further than that.

Nothing to Conceal.

I say that there is no department of the government which has been so systematically brought up for examination as the Department of the Interior. Take the committees of the House, and you will find that while I was in charge, year after year the officials of the Department of the Interior were brought before them, especially the Committee on Agriculture, and examined in detail upon the various transactions in which the department was engaged. Did I ever show any disposition to burk the investigations of the Agriculture Committee or any of these committees? Did I go there as a minister to choke off discussion or prevent a free examination of my officials? Sir, I never was in a committee room of this building when one of the officers of the Interior department was being examined. My instruction to the officials was, whenever called upon, to put themselves entirely at the disposal of the committee and answer such questions as were asked. I had nothing to conceal. I wanted them to tell whatever the committee wanted to know, and, as far as I am concerned, I think they did it. Therefore as regards secrecy or the withholding of information I venture to say that the charge of my hon. friend is not well founded.

Grazing Leases.

My hon. friend and some others have made some remarks in connection with the question of grazing leases. My hon. friend who just sat down (Mr. Lake) is evidently hunting for somebody to take the responsibility of certain grazing leases granted in the Northwest Territories. Well, let me tell him that he need not hunt any longer. I am here to take the responsibility for these grazing leases granted while I had charge of the department. I presume they were granted in pursuance of the regulations. I do not know the details at all, but I signed my name to the recommendation to go before council for the purpose of adopting certain grazing regulations and I take the responsibility of the regulations then adopted. In my judgment they embody sound policy. By that policy I am prepared to stand, and I take the responsibility of anything done in carrying it out. What was the policy? For nine years we had difficulties in the Territories in connection with the question of cattle lands and farm lands. The dispute between the cattlemen and the farmers is one that exists wherever there is a new country with ranchers and farmers located side by side.

The same dispute exists in Australia and the western states as in the Northwest of Canada, but I think I succeeded fairly well in avoiding friction between the two classes. But I found great difficulty in arriving at any conclusion regarding the adoption of a permanent policy. There is room for broad differences of opinion.

The view I took as regards the areas which will never be fit for farming is that they should be maintained for grazing purposes, and the view I further took—and it is a view sustained by experience in Montana where the conditions are precisely similar—is that unless these areas, which are wholly fitted for grazing and not fitted for anything else, are let out into leaseholds, so that portions of them will be irrigated and the rest protected, the result will be that the natural sod of the prairies will be destroyed and all pasturage destroyed. And you will then have a vast area, such as Montana has, absolutely fit for nothing. For the purpose of meeting the conditions of the country at that time, I decided upon the grazing regulations which were passed by council, and under which certain grazing leases were granted and certain sales took place. So far as the sales are concerned, I do not know the details. I suppose they were made in pursuance of these regulations. I have no doubt the proper officers of the department made the valuations and decided on the prices, which should be paid. That is a matter with regard to which I know nothing, but I presume the thing was done in the proper way. But I want to say that I believe it is good policy that a reasonable amount of land should be given into the hands of the ranchmen, under certain circumstances, and in such a way that they will be able to irrigate it and raise proper fodder for their cattle. Everybody who knows anything of the Territories at present, knows that owing to the fact that the ranches are being circumscribed, the cattle business will become a thing of the past unless the ranchers are in a position to raise fodder for their cattle instead of depending altogether upon running them at large as they did in former years.

One of my friends on the other side of the House last night said that the policy of the Conservative party was "the land for the settler." Some of our friends on the other side of the House make academic arguments to that effect but I hope that none of them expect us who know the conditions in the Northwest to take them seriously.

Land Given to Speculators.

The Conservative government tried to give the land away. I have here a list of sales. One man received 12,900 acres, another 4,800 acres, another 20,000 acres, another 18,000 acres. Were they ranch men, cattle men, men engaged in carrying on the industries of the country? No, they were speculators, cold blooded, simple speculators.

An hon. MEMBER. The land for the settler.

Mr. SIFTON. And then when legitimate business men come here and for the purpose of carrying on a legitimate business which they are carrying on, increasing the export cattle trade of this country, and assisting to maintain the commercial position of Canada; and make a legitimate purchase of land for a legitimate purpose the thing is held up as though it was a most outrageous thing and every one who has had anything to do with it, is supposed to be on his defence, to run away and get frightened. I want my hon. friend to understand that I do not run away and get frightened on account of any transactions I have to do with.

Timber Berths.

My hon. friends have had a great deal to say about timber berths. If there is any comfort to them in the subject of timber berths I have no objection to their having it, but listening to the debates so far, I am bound to say, I have not been able to discern where the comfort to them has come in. The Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) was able to show last night, I venture to say, the most scandalous and outrageous alienation of public property that has ever taken place on this continent, when he showed that 29,000 square miles of timber had been disposed of out of which over 23,000 were given away for nothing, without bonus. Under what circumstances, Mr. Speaker? 29,000 square miles? I am told by a gentleman near me who has made the calculation—I have not made it myself—that that amount of timber which was given away would make a strip 100 miles wide from here to Toronto. Now, why was the timber given away? The only reason for selling timber on the part of any government is to supply the people with lumber. Was there anybody there to be supplied with lumber? Why there was nobody there. The timber was sold all over that vast country, altogether out of reach of railroads, altogether out of reach of the people. There was no pos-

sible reason or excuse of any kind whatever for the disposition of this timber except to put something into the hands of the gentlemen who acquired these limits.

What have we done? As against 29,999 square miles in that territory we disposed altogether while I was in office of about 4,000 square miles of timber. It has been disposed of gradually from time to time in accordance with the demands that have been made by the men who have gone out and explored it and it has been put to public competition. That amount I venture to say is not excessive; the amount has been regulated to some extent by the ordinary conditions, under conditions calling for no special check on the part of the government because the amount of timber that was given, as I said, was not excessive under all the circumstances, amounting to 4,000 square miles scattered over the whole territory.

Danger of Timber Famine.

Now, why is timber disposed of? It is disposed of in order that mills may be erected and in order that the people may have a reasonable amount of competition in connection with the supply of lumber. To hear some of our friends on the other side of the House talk, during the discussion that took place upon my hon. friend's (Mr. Oliver) Forestry Bill one would think that a stretch of timber land was like a rose garden, that a man had in a little walled place behind his house, that he could go out and look at it and pet it once in a while, and could send some one to trim it when he thought it was not as it should be, and that timber could be dealt with in the same way. I want my hon. friend to understand that cannot be done. Dealing with timber in a practical business way is a different proposition altogether. You do not get mills erected on timber limits until practical lumbermen have been out and explored the country. You do not get production on a large scale until roads have been built, until things have been done that require the expenditure of large sums of money, and these things cannot be done in a day, these things cannot be done in a month, and unless the department pursue a reasonable policy in connection with the lumbermen who deal with the department and are engaged in the business of producing lumber what will be the result? The result will be that some fine day we will wake up and find a shortage of lumber and the people will be crying out because two or three big firms south of the line have a monopoly and they are paying \$5 or \$6 a thousand more

than they ought to. That is a position the department had to consider no less than two or three times while I was in charge, and it was our policy to encourage at one time especially the disposition of limits and also to encourage the coming in of firms from outside to establish mills on a large scale.

Some of my hon. friends from the Northwest will remember that three or four years ago when the rush for settlement first got heavy, there was imminent danger of a lumber famine in the west, that inquiries were made all over for the purpose of getting supplies and the railway companies had to make tremendous efforts to collect a sufficient supply to meet the demands of the settlers. So that what I have stated has been the general policy we have followed in connection with the disposition of timber.

The Talk of Family Graft.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) took occasion to read a list of timber berths which had been acquired by Mr. T. A. Burrows, a member of this House who happens to be my brother-in-law. My hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) did not make any offensive suggestion as I understand him in connection with the reading of that list, but it was perhaps too much to expect that my hon. friend would refrain from bringing it up. For myself I am rather pleased that he did. While statements regarding matters of that kind are floating around in the newspapers, a member of parliament does not feel disposed to bring them into discussion in the House, but now it has been brought up I have an opportunity of saying a word or two and Mr. Burrows who is a member of this House, thoroughly capable of speaking for himself, will probably speak for himself and state his position in connection with it before the debate is over. My hon. friend made no offensive suggestion so far as I understood him, but unfortunately my hon. friend (Mr. R. L. Borden) is not able to exercise control over the members of his press, and as I looked at my newspaper this morning when I was sitting at breakfast, one of the things that I saw on the first page among the important news items was that family graft had been exposed in connection with the administration of the Department of the Interior. I want to say and to say as distinctly as I know how to say it, that no family graft has ever been exposed or ever will be exposed in connection with the administration of the Department of the Interior while I was in charge

of it. I want to say that so far as Mr. Burrows is concerned, he is a business man, capable of taking care of himself, that he never got from the Department of Interior while I was in charge of it, any single favour of any kind or description that any other man could not have got under the regulations of the department; absolutely nothing, not a single favour.

Grossly Unfair Statements.

I want to say that in so far as the general administration of the Department of the Interior is concerned, the whole matter has been grossly and unfairly misstated, though not, I presume, intentionally, by my hon. friend the leader of the opposition. But anybody listening to the remarks that he made, would think that Mr. Burrows had never had anything to do with lumber until I became Minister of the Interior; then, suddenly, finding his brother-in-law was in charge of the department, and would have charge of the Dominion timber area he thought he would have a good chance to get some timber, and proceeded to do so, and that he did it in some improper way. The facts are that Mr. Burrows began to be a lumberman about thirty years ago. He had been in the lumber business when he was a boy, and dealt with the Department of the Interior for timber limits when I was in private life, practising law, and before I was a member of parliament or a member of the legislature. He got timber limits from the late Conservative government and got them for nothing. He has been doing a lumber business—he never did any other business so far as I know,—doing a lumber business in an area where timber was owned by the federal government, and where, if he wanted to continue his business, he had to keep on dealing with the Department of the Interior. Will anybody suggest that because I became Minister of the Interior, my brother-in-law was to go out of the business which he had followed for fifteen years. That would be a most ridiculous suggestion. What he did do was to go on just as he had been doing before, doing business with the Department of the Interior, taking his holdings under the regulations of the department, just the same as any other citizen of Canada had a right to do, just the same as he has a right to do from now on, no matter who may be minister of the department.

Lumbermen all Notified.

We have heard some attacks made upon the department by reason of the changes that are said to have been made, or by rea-

son of the policy that has been followed in connection with the disposition of timber, outside of the method in which the disposition is taking place. Before I leave that phase of the question, however, I want to say this, that the timber disposed of by the department has been disposed of under the regulations, and has been exposed to competition in the regular way, in every single instance, so far as I am aware. The regulation under which this is done is as follows: When a limit is to be put up, an advertisement is inserted in the newspapers, an official advertisement, and the public are given a reasonable length of time in which to tender. But I want to call attention to this fact in addition. The department has not contented itself with merely publishing an advertisement in the newspapers, because that might escape the notice of some men who are in the lumber business, and who might be desirous of tendering. There is on file in the Department of the Interior, a long list of names, comprising all the purchasing lumbermen, all who deal with lumber in Western Canada, and it comprises the name of every man who asks to have his name put on that list.

Any member of this House, any member of the Senate, any man in Canada who wants to get a notice in connection with the disposition of timber, can go up and ask to have his name put on that list and it will be put on. Every time a timber berth is advertised for sale a printed notice is always sent to every individual whose name is on that list. Can anybody say that there is an opportunity for fraud in the disposition of timber under such circumstances, when the whole fraternity of lumbermen from one end of the country to the other are fully aware of everything that is going on.

Do-nothing Policy Wanted.

Now, the hon. gentlemen brought up the question of the regulations under which timber has been disposed of, and of changes in the regulations. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that if I were listening to the debate that took place in this House when hon. gentlemen opposite were speaking, and to their discussion of the conduct of business in the Department of the Interior, the conclusion I would arrive at would be this, that if the minister of the department wanted to escape criticism, if he wanted to do more than that, if he wanted to secure the condemnation of hon. gentlemen opposite, the course he would have to pursue

would be to do absolutely nothing, of any kind whatever. It appears to me that would meet with the complete approval of some hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, because every solitary thing that is done they seem to regard as wrong, and as being done with some sinister motive.

Preservation of Forests.

Take for instance the question of the preservation of timber by the Department of the Interior. I want to say that I have some opinions upon that subject, and they are opinions which I have tried to give effect to in my humble way. Some years ago I inaugurated a forestry branch in the Department of the Interior. For the first time, so far as I know, on this continent, there was established a system of encouraging the planting of trees at government expense and with government assistance. I was glad to see that my hon. friend the leader of the opposition seemed to favour that system at the forestry convention which met in Ottawa last winter. My hon. friend appeared to be; I am glad to find out, a convert to the view of the enlightened gentlemen who met in the city of Ottawa for the purpose of discussing the great question of the preservation of the forests of the country. My hon. friend seemed to take an interest in it, and I am glad he did. But my hon. friend will remember that when I came down here year after year and asked for a little miserable appropriation of \$15,000 for the purpose of inaugurating the great work which has been commenced by this government, that I did not get any assistance from him and from the gentlemen surrounding him, and behind him. On the contrary, they obstructed that appropriation and tried to prevent it. But now what do we find? Any one. But now what do we find? Any one who attended that forestry convention and heard these enlightened men speaking upon the subject of forestry, will remember that when they learned what had been done by the Department of the Interior they regarded that little step as one of the most progressive acts that any government had ever accomplished on this continent. Men like Dr. Fernow, and Dr. Schenck, men whose names are of world wide authority, referred to the adoption of this policy in terms of the highest approval.

Upon the question of the preservation of forests I have very strong views, and for the purpose of assisting that preservation appropriations were taken from time to time, and we made provision for fire guards

and the protection of the forests from destruction by fire.

My hon. friends have found fault with us because we have changed the regulations. But if they will read the discussions which took place at that convention, and if they will read the statements that have been made in this House so late as this session, they will find a general agreement of opinion that the man who cuts the timber is not the enemy of the timber, it is not the lumberman that destroys the timber supply, it is the fire that destroys the timber supplies. These fires are started by the settler improvidently on his own holding, and he allows them to run into the forest.

Settlement on Forest Areas.

Now, what has been the difficulty in the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec. Anybody will tell you that in Ontario and Quebec the main difficulty in regard to the preservation of the forests has been the fact that settlers have been allowed to go in and settle amongst the timber. Every lumberman will tell you that. The hon. member for Argenteuil (Mr. Perley), a practical lumberman, I understand, said that when the question came up here not long ago. One of the main things that I desired to do when the regulations were changed was to prevent settlers from settling upon forest areas. The government of Ontario would do that if they were not hampered by political difficulties; the government of Quebec would do that if they were not hampered by political difficulties. On the merits of the case there is no question, but that is the proper thing to do. That is one of the changes in the regulations that has been complained of.

Renewal Licenses.

Then, my hon. friend has complained that I made a change in the timber regulations which changed the tenure of the limit holders and added greatly to the value of the limits. I do not know that it is a bad thing to add to the value of the limits. If they are held by citizens of Canada and the money does not come out of the pockets of the people I would not fret very much because value had been added to the limits. But, as a matter of fact, what was the change that was made in the timber regulations? The licenses were annual and there was a provision that upon compliance with the conditions the licenses might be annually renewed. What does that mean? Does not everybody know that it means

that they shall be renewed? Will you tell anybody who has a mining claim in the Yukon that the government can cancel this claim at the end of the year without compensation? Take the regulations of Ontario and of Quebec; go down to the Russell House when a sale is taking place, and when \$600,000 is paid for a single timber limit, as I have known it to be done, will you tell the man who pays that \$600,000 for a limit that the government can cancel his license at the end of the year? The thing is absolutely preposterous. Everybody knows that the meaning of these regulations is that the licenses are perpetually renewable so long as there is merchantable timber upon the limit. Some time ago a suggestion was made to the department that a change should be made in these regulations in regard to the wording of the particular clause which deals with the matter to which I have referred. Mr. J. S. Hough, solicitor of the Red Deer Lumber Company, which has since that time invested \$400,000 or \$500,000 to establish mills and other properties in the northern part of Manitoba and who are actually today in the lumber business, in a very large way, came to the Department of the Interior and placed before me a request that a change should be made in the wording of this regulation. He said: "We have clients who are going largely into the lumber business, it will be a benefit to the province, they will be competitors for limits and it will raise the price of your limits. You know yourself that there is a need of lumber in the northern part of Manitoba. But, we are met with a difficulty. We are raising large sums of money for the purposes of our company to go into this business but we find that the solicitors of the company in St. Paul do not understand and cannot be got to understand the meaning of this particular regulation. We have advised them that the licenses are renewable from year to year and that the government interprets them in that way, that there is no possible question about it that if they buy the timber and get the license just so long as they comply with the conditions their license shall be renewed, but the answer that they make is: If that is the case, the government ought to be willing to say so in the regulation. He said to me: Do you see any objection to making a change in the regulation so as to say that from year to year, so long as the conditions are complied with, the license shall be renewable?"

I gave the matter some consideration and I said: No. I do not see any objection to that for the simple reason that it

does not change the facts in any shape, form or manner. It simply places in words what the government actually does in fact. The change was made, it was made for that purpose and for that purpose only. It does not alter the conditions or the tenure or the manner in which the renewal shall be made to the extent of one iota.

A Progressive Policy.

I claim, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that in so far as the disposition of the timber of this country is concerned we have followed an enlightened and progressive policy. We have disposed of a sufficient amount of timber to encourage the construction of a sufficient number of mills to supply a reasonable amount of timber to the population which we were bound to see was properly supplied. We have carried out the regulations in such a way as to improve the position of the department in respect to the preservation of the timber from fires. But, we have endeavoured to go farther than that, and to adopt and carry out a policy which looks to tree planting throughout the west and to generally improve forest conditions, and I think that if there is any subject upon which the department may fairly ask for the commendation of the public it is in regard to the question of forestry and the manner in which they have dealt with the timber and the forest question.

Why Was Mr. Foster Backward?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the department has been attacked upon a great many different grounds. I have, in so far as I am able to remember from the notes which I took, dealt with most of the main points, which seem to me of a serious character, made by my hon. friend the leader of the opposition and his followers since the opening of the discussion upon this resolution. But, the Department of the Interior has been under fire most of this session and a good many speeches have been made of one kind and another. My hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) has made some. I would have spoken earlier in the debate had it not been for the one fact that I thought that we would hear from the hon. gentleman at an early stage in the debate. I had thought that an hon. gentleman claiming, I believe, to rank next to the leader of the opposition upon the opposition benches, when serious charges were being brought against the government in regard to the affairs of an important department and they were making a field day of the debate, would have got up when his

time came and said what he had to say in regard to the department over which I had the honour to preside. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) was brave enough when I was in Florida. I would like to know why the hon. gentleman got a back bench member to move the adjournment of the debate last night? Why did not he take his place beside his leader and say what he had to say; say it when I was here, say it face to face? What is the reason the hon. gentleman is afraid to speak when I am here?

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. SIFTON. You needn't say oh, oh; why didn't he do it?

Mr. LANCASTER. He will do it.

Mr. SIFTON. He had plenty to say when I was not here; plenty to say about my department, plenty of statements to make about me; but when I came back to this House, when I rose in my place the first day I came here and challenged him to make good, he sneaks back into this House without saying a word, without saying he will make a charge, without having the manliness to withdraw his statements. And now when the affairs of this department are under discussion and his leader has led the way like a man and put himself up to have his arguments answered, why does not the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) come up and stand before me and say what he has to say and give me a chance to reply.

Mr. TAYLOR. Wait a while and he will.

Mr. SIFTON. He is bold when I am absent. The reason why the hon. gentleman has not done so is obvious, and it will be more obvious before I get through. The leader of the opposition has no apprehension about getting up and making a speech upon a public question; he does not care who follows him. And why? It is because he intends to make a fair statement of his case; he is not afraid of any one making an attack upon him after he has made his speech. If the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) intended to make a fair speech why did he not get up and make it? But he does not intend to engage in fair debate; if he did he would not be afraid of any reply that might be made to him. So far as I am concerned, I do not care whether the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster) is here or whether he is absent. I do not care whether he is in Florida or in Toronto; I do not care whether he is in front of me or behind me; I think the time has come

for me to speak in connection with the affairs of the Department of the Interior and it is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether the hon. gentleman follows me or speaks before me, or what he says when he does follow me.

I have a few remarks to make on some of the things which the hon. gentleman has said when I was not here, and I must apologize if I have to refer to some of the matters which have already been discussed in this House. The whole question of the administration of this department has been brought before the House so often and under so many different circumstances during the present session, that in dealing with it one is bound to repeat to a greater or less extent that which has been said before, and one is liable under such circumstances to become tiresome.

Saskatchewan Valley Land Co.

However, there is this one question which has been discussed repeatedly, viz.: the transaction of the Department of the Interior with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, and which our friends opposite seem to think is one out of which they are going to get a great deal of political advantage. As I am primarily and almost entirely responsible for the making of that contract I shall have to deal with the matter at some length. I shall not weary the House more than is absolutely necessary, but there are a certain number of points that must be made so that my position, and the position of the government shall be absolutely clear.

The House is more or less familiar with the fact that a number of years before the present government came into power, somewhere before the year 1899, the Conservative government promised and provided by legislation and order in council, to give a land grant to the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway Company. That railway was built and finished about the year 1890. A certain tract of land was set apart for the purpose of satisfying the land grant which had been voted to that railway. The land grant itself amounted to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1,000,000 acres and the reserve set aside for the purpose of satisfying the land grant comprised about 3,500,000. The salient point I bring to the attention of the House is that the land grant was about 1,000,000 acres and the reserve was about 3,500,000 acres—I give these figures in round numbers. This question had been before the government for some years prior

to my taking office, and the difficulty that arose in connection with the settlement of the question was that the company claimed they could not get their million acres fairly fit for settlement within the confines of the 3,500,000 acres that had been reserved. The company had taken 128,000 acres and had agreed to take 224,336 acres more. They declined to take any additional amount and they claimed that there was no land fit for settlement in the whole 3,500,000 acres reserved except the 350,000 acres which they had agreed to take. There were 773,000 acres which they were still entitled to get, and they claimed that none of the land in the 3,000,000 acres reserve was fit for settlement towards satisfying the balance of 773,000 acres.

Letter From Osler & Hammond.

I am not going to burden the House with documents, but I will read one letter because I think it ought to be before the members of the House to enable them to locate in their minds certain points in connection with this transaction. The matter came before me as minister, and it was debated and discussed between myself and different representatives of the company; the company being represented by Messrs. Osler, Hammond and Nanton and their solicitors. After repeated discussions between us it became apparent that no conclusion could be arrived at between myself and the representatives of the company. Then the company entered an action in the Exchequer Court for the purpose of compelling the government, as they said, to carry out the contract which they alleged the government had not carried out because they could not get the land fairly fit for settlement within the 3,000,000 acres reserve. While the action was pending Messrs. Osler and Hammond wrote the following letter to the right hon. the Prime Minister in regard to this matter:

Ottawa, July 4, 1900.

To the Right Honourable
Sir Wilfrid Laurier, G.C.M.G.,
Premier, &c.

Sir,—Having reference to the action which is now pending in the Exchequer Court against Her Majesty at the suit of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company et al., and to the verbal negotiations for a settlement which have taken place between us and your government, we think it well that we should put our views in writing in the hope that your government will fa-

vourably entertain the proposition which we intend making, and thus put an end to the long-standing dispute between the company and its guarantees and the government.

As you will see from a perusal of the order in council and agreement between the company and the government, the company became entitled in 1890, ten years ago, to its land grant of 6,400 acres per mile, in consideration of the building of it railway from Regina to Prince Albert.

Acres.
The total grant to which the company became entitled is... 1,625,344
From this there should be deducted for the piece from Regina to the foot of Long Lake, 20 miles accepted by the company.... 128,000 acres
One-third of the remaining 1,497,344 acres retained by the government as security 499,114 acres

627,114

Balance 998,230

Of the quantity, out of the reservation set aside by the Governor in Council in 1890, out of which the grant was to be selected, the total area of lands fairly fit for settlement, which by agreement with the government, the company was entitled to, is 224,336.96 acres, leaving a deficiency of 773,894 acres. We beg to hand you herewith a copy of the petition of right which sets forth the facts, and from a perusal of it, you will see how earnestly we have striven during the past ten years to arrive at a settlement, and how at last a resort to the Exchequer Court became necessary.

On behalf of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Land Company, of London, England, who are entitled to the greater portion of the land grant, and also on behalf of ourselves and other grantees, holding comparatively small interests, we now offer to accept a cash settlement for the deficiency in lands to which we are entitled, based upon the price of \$1.50 per acre, this being the minimum price at which it was stipulated the lands in the government one-third reserve could be sold, and which sum was thereby fixed as the fair settlement, and lawful interest since then, namely 6 per cent per annum, or say \$2.40 per acre.

We feel confident that in the Exchequer Court a much larger sum could be recovered, for the reason that out of the 224,336 acres accepted, sales are being made at \$3

per acre, while the Canadian Pacific Railway Company is selling its lands at from \$3 to \$5 per acre.

We recognize, however, that the delay and expense of litigation will be vexatious to our people, particularly to those residing in England, who, as already stated, are most largely interested, and in order to end the matter we make, without prejudice, the above proposal.

If, when the land grant was earned, in 1890, the government had been able to give to them the lands to which our people then became entitled, they would ere now have been recouped to a considerable extent for their outlay, and with the rapid rise which is taking place in land values in the Northwest, they would soon receive a fair profit upon their investment.

If a settlement is not made, it must be understood that the present offer will not be a measure of the compensation which the plaintiffs will claim, but that they shall be free to ask from the court such amount as they may, by the evidence, be able to show they are fairly entitled to receive.

We should say that we shall be unable to leave the above offer open for any length of time, as our instructions are to push the suit in the Exchequer Court without delay.

We have the honour to be,
Your obedient servants,

(Sgd.) OSLER & HAMMOND.

I have read this letter in full, although some parts of it are not particularly germane to the discussion, because I do not want to be under the imputation of suppressing any part of it for any purpose whatever.

Only Land fit for Settlement.

I desire to place the letter before the House for the purpose of showing them that the firm of Osler and Hammond (of course, everybody knows that my Hon. friend the member for West Toronto is the Mr. Osler of the firm, which is known in the Northwest as Osler, Hammond and Nanton)—that firm as the representatives of the railway company, wrote this letter in which they stated, in the clearest, most distinct, positive and definite terms, that the only land fit for settlement in the whole tract of 3,000,000 odd acres were the 200,000 odd acres they had selected, and that beyond that there was no land fairly fit for settlement in the land from which they were entitled to select, so that the infer-

ence was that what was left in the government's hands did not contain any land fairly fit for settlement.

Subsequently to the receipt of this letter by the Prime Minister, the solicitor of the company, Mr. A. R. Creelman, waited upon me in my office in the Department of the Interior, and stated to me that he was desirous that the government should make an offer to the company of \$1.25 per acre, which he said he was satisfied the company would accept if the government would make it. I declined to make that offer. I declined to open the subject for consideration with my colleagues—of course, I had no authority to make the offer myself.

Mr. TURRIFF. What was the date of that offer?

Mr. SIFTON. It was some time after the letter was written by Messrs. Osler and Hammond, and some time after the suit had begun. I took no note of the time. Of course, it logically followed the letter. When they did not get on well with the suit, when they found that they were unable to accomplish anything in that way, they became more desirous for a settlement, and the solicitor of the company came to me and made that suggestion. I declined to take it into consideration at all, and the suit went on.

The House has been told repeatedly during the debates that have taken place on this question during the present session what the nature of this tract of land, which was subsequently sold to the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, was. That particular tract of land began 30 miles north of Regina and ran for 60 or 65 miles in the direction of Saskatoon.

When the Contract was Made.

This tract of land had been surveyed since 1882 with the exception of a small part of it. When the contract was made for the sale of lands to the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, there were, so far as I can ascertain, only three homestead entries in good standing in the sixty-five miles. There was not a railway station or any sign of population in the whole sixty-five miles. The country was an absolute desert. I am not going to enlarge upon this phase of the question, because gentlemen who are personally familiar with that district have given their opinion of it on several occasions this session. The hon. member for Winnipeg (Mr. Bole) last night made a statement which is absolutely conclusive. He lived within twenty-five miles or thirty miles of this place and

knows its history and all about it. He stated in the House last night most explicitly that he personally knew that everything said in this regard was perfectly true, that the land was known to be an absolute desert, that there was no one on it, and that it was a by-word throughout the whole section. That was the position until the time when the contract was made with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company.

My hon. friend the leader of the opposition said last night that when the sale was made, it was known that the land was fertile. How was it known? There was, he said, in the first place, the report of Mr. Speers. Well, Mr. Speers is a colonization agent of the Department of the Interior. He is not a land examiner at all. It is not his business to make reports upon land. He had gone in a cursory way over that section a number of times, but he never made a detailed examination such as a land examiner would. He made an inspection subsequently, I believe, with regard to the carrying out of terms of the contract; but so far as making a detailed examination, as a land examiner would, section by section, I do not remember ever seeing any report from him of such an examination. But what Mr. Speers said in this report was this. He said there were some sections along that land that were good, and he intimated that he thought something could be made out of the country if an attempt were made to settle it. I accepted Mr. Speers' report when I made this contract. I thought there were some good sections along the line, and I think so yet. Not very many, not so many as the company thought, and not so many as my hon. friends think, but there are some good, some indifferent and some medium. But what Mr. Speers particularly desired, in his report, was that the government should make some attempt to settle the land, and it was the carrying out of that idea which found expression in the contract made with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company.

Mr. Speers' Report.

I shall read this report again because I want the members of the House to listen and form their own opinions from the reading of the report as to what effect the reading of this report would naturally have on my mind as the minister in charge who received the report and who would take the appropriate action upon it if any action was to be taken. Let me premise that Mr. Speers is not a land examiner; Mr. Speers is the colonization agent of the department. It is his business to locate and look after

the location of parties of settlers, to report upon how they are getting along and to keep the immigration branch and the management of the department generally posted as to what is going on in connection with the various settlements of newly arrived immigrants. Mr. Speers is a capable officer and a good judge of land when he goes out to make this his special business. But he is not supposed to have made at all what we would call in the Department of the Interior an examination of this land. Upon the files of the department were the reports of men who did make examinations of this land and what we regard as an examination of land by a land examiner is an examination made in this way: a party is organized, a man goes out and goes upon every section of the land and wherever there is any question of doubt in his mind he sinks test holes for the purpose of testing the depth of soil and makes what is called a proper examination of the land and his report is regarded as reliable. That is the kind of examination that was made by men acting both for the railway and the government and the reports of the land examiners made in that way were upon the files of the department. The report as I have said led both the government and the railway company to the same conclusion which was that this land was wholly unfit for settlement according to our ideas at that time of what was land fit for settlement. I shall have a word or two to say later on upon this qualification. What Mr. Speers says is this:

"I enclose herewith a map showing the land lying adjacent to the S. L. L. and R. Railway between Lumsden, 20 miles north of Regina, and Dundurn, 135 miles from Regina."

That includes the contract in question and a little more.

"In calling your attention to the land marked on a map a distance of 115 miles on both sides of the railway, I beg to point out that this piece of country has been pronounced by a great many people totally unfit for settlement, and very much through popular opinion is considered one of our very worst districts.

"This opinion is entertained by Osler, Hammond & Nanton. Doubtless the country referred to has been the result of difficulty between your department and the railroad company pertaining to their land grant. I have no hesitation, however, in stating that a great many very good districts can be found along this line of railway between the points mentioned.

"But that includes a very considerable area beyond the tract which we are speaking of.

"I have observed very closely this stretch of country, and am thoroughly convinced that some progressive settlements can be placed along that line——"

That is within a distance of 115 miles. —that will establish the fact that that country is all right.

"I beg to point out that there is not one bushel of wheat produced within this 115 miles, and I am persuaded that if a few hundred acres of crop were grown about half way between Lumsden and Dundurn demonstrating the fact that the country was good, that a great deal of this land would rapidly fill up with settlers.

"I am sorry that I had not an opportunity of speaking a few moments to you on this question, and I would recommend that as the representative of the S. L. L. and R. Railway, through their agents, Osler, Hammond & Nanton, seem afraid of their land grant in the district referred to that you take over this land, feeling sure that we can settle it and dispose of it in the interest of the department. I might point out that for nine years the Soo Line was without any settlers; one year from today that country will be entirely filled up.

"We are experiencing a little difficulty in getting homesteads near railroads."

This letter came in from an officer of the department who had never made a detailed examination of this land at all but had observed it as a colonization agent going through the country; he had never made any pretense of making what would be called a scientific examination and no minister in his senses would come to the conclusion that he should substantially modify his views in regard to the character of a large tract of land that had been examined in detail by expert examiners, examining every section carefully and thoroughly, and deliberately reported upon. I venture to say there is not a man on the government benches that would not do exactly as I did and would say: Well my colonization agent is a little enthusiastic but I do not just care to act on that report at the present time.

Then my hon. friend for the purpose of proving as he says that it was known that this land was fertile—I think he will himself admit his language was a little strong —cites a letter written by a gentleman

named Thomson. I have had some acquaintance with Mr. Thomson for a number of years; I always thought he was an estimable gentleman; I do not know a great deal about him except that he is a literary man, a newspaper man; I think he is regarded as a man with pretty good literary qualifications, but I do not know that anybody ever accused him of being a judge of land and I do not know that anybody ever suggested any evidence that Mr. Thomson knew anything about what this land was considered to be in the year 1902 when he sold it. But to suppose that because a gentleman who apparently just now is not on very good terms with my hon. friend (Mr. Oliver) for some reason which they probably both know, but which nobody else knows as far as I am aware, has seen fit to get after the Department of the Interior in a newspaper, is to be taken as evidence by this House in regard to the value of land in 1902, is I fancy a little far fetched, and the leader of the opposition (Mr. R. L. Borden) will probably admit that in his calmer moments.

The Actual Fact.

Now what is the actual fact? What are the things that we know in regard to this land? Let us get away from things that have happened since and get at the position in which I was at that time as the responsible head of the Department of the Interior.

What we know is this, that by this very report which my hon. friend quotes, for 115 miles, there was not any settlement. For sixty-five miles there were actually no residents at all. So far as the officers of the department know, as I said before, there were only three homestead entries in good standing in that territory at that time. Now why was it? Was it because this was an isolated place away from the line of traffic, and where people did not see it? On the contrary, south of it was the town of Regina, north of Regina for twenty miles was a fertile strip of country rapidly settling up. Then intervened this strip of desert. North of that again was the territory of Saskatoon and north of Saskatoon, Rosthern and Duck Lake, and there settlers were pouring in. They settled around on the Regina plains, they crossed this desert, went through it by the thousands, would not look at it, and went up to Duck Lake, up to Rosthern and settled there. And here in the spring of 1902 was this spot on the map in the shape of an absolutely unsettled territory. There

had been a railway running trains three times a week, I think for over ten years, and no railway stations in the whole sixty miles. There was not a place where trains would stop for the purpose of giving accommodation, because there were no people to accommodate. These are facts which are absolutely beyond question or dispute.

Then the spring of 1902 came along, and the gentlemen who afterwards formed the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company, came to the Department of the Interior, or one of them came on their behalf, I think it was Colonel Davidson, and interviewed the deputy minister, and stated to him that he was engaged in negotiating with the representatives of the railway company for the purchase of their lands, and made a proposition to the Department of the Interior looking to the purchase of the even numbered sections in this particular tract. The deputy minister declined to entertain their proposition, because it was a proposition simply for the purchase of land, and the Department of the Interior was not desirous of selling simply for the sake of selling, or selling any considerable tract, the policy of the department being rather,

if any transaction was engaged in, to make that transaction a means of settling the country and thereby making it more productive. Well, they went away.

They came back, and they made a proposition to the deputy minister looking to the purchase of the land upon settlement conditions. The matter was discussed between the deputy minister and the representatives of the company, and at last the negotiations were referred to me.

The Contract.

I finally approved of the contract which had been agreed upon between them, and the contract was made by a submission of the matter to council, and the passage of the necessary order in council. I do not remember that the contract was ever read in the House. It is short, and I think some of the things that have been said in the House in discussion might have been avoided if the contract had been read. With the exception of the description of the land which is of no account, for the purposes of this discussion, I will read the contract.

"Extract from a report of a committee of the honourable the Privy Council approved by His Excellency on the 24th of May, 1902.

"On a report dated the 9th of May, 1902, from the Minister of the Interior, submitting that he has received a proposition from Mr. A. B. Davidson, of Duluth, Minnesota, on behalf of himself and his associates, Messrs. G. F. Piper, A. L. Warner, Geo. C. Howe, D. H. Macdonald and A. J. Adamson—"

I may say that Mr. Davidson and the first three gentlemen, I believe, are all Americans, the last two, Macdonald and Adamson, were Canadians.

"—for the purchase at the rate of \$1 an acre of the even-numbered sections in a tract of land situated along the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway, on condition of placing a certain number of settlers on lands in each of the townships affected.

"The minister states that the commissioner of immigration and the general colonization agent have very strongly recommended the proposition for the favourable consideration of the department, particularly in view of the fact that the lands applied for have hitherto been entirely passed over by incoming settlers as not being of a sufficiently desirable quality to induce their taking them up for settlement purposes.

"The minister recommends, after giving the matter very careful consideration, that the proposition of Mr. Davidson and his associates be complied with to the following extent:"

Then a description of the land follows.

"The land shall be selected in certain townships.

"The area to be disposed of to the company is not to exceed in all 250,000 acres and the price is to be \$1 an acre.

"That the purchaser shall deposit with the government the sum of \$500,000 as security for carrying out the conditions of the sale; the said amount to be retained by the government until all the lands have been earned, then this money shall be applied in payment of the last 50,000 acres of land.

"It is agreed that the purchaser shall place twenty settlers on free homestead lands in each township, and twelve settlers on lands which may be sold by the purchasers before they shall be entitled to the remaining even-numbered sections; in other words, there shall be in each township twenty quarter-sections to be settled on by homesteaders and twelve by the company on other sections which the settler may purchase to entitle the purchasers to buy from the department the balance of

the even-numbered sections at the disposal of the Department of the Interior.

"It is understood that this arrangement shall extend over a period of five years, but that the purchaser shall be obliged to perform at least two-fifths of the conditions as to settlers being placed on the lands within two years from the date hereof, and one-fifth each year thereafter, otherwise they shall forfeit the right to purchase and the amount of money deposited with the government as security.

"The department agrees that as soon as certain townships have been settled in accordance with the agreement, the purchasers may receive the balance of the lands to which they will be entitled in such townships under the agreement at \$1 per acre, with interest at four per cent, beginning two years from this date, to the date of such payment. No interest shall be allowed to purchasers by the department on the deposit of \$50,000.

"It is further agreed that the department will accept payment for these lands in cash or scrip, as the purchasers may desire.

"Any entries granted to settlers, or any settlers who may have taken up land without entry, and who have made improvements on their holdings within any of the townships named, are to be protected and maintained in their right to free homestead entry."

That is a clause similar to one in the Dominion Lands Act, and is a general provision between the government and railway companies that any person who is on the lands as a squatter shall be protected.

"It is further understood that as soon as the deposit is made in connection with this purchase the government will proceed with the subdivisional survey of any of the townships mentioned which have not yet been subdivided."

There were a few of them, I believe, that were not divided.

The minister recommends, Mr. Davidson having signified his consent on behalf of himself and associates, to accept the above terms, and having duly deposited the stipulated sum of \$50,000 in scrip, that he be authorized to carry out the arrangement on the terms and conditions above set forth."

What the Company did.

Now there is the contract that was made. That arrangement having been made, the

company started work. Let me premise the fact that the company was not simply in the position of having purchased this 250,000 acres, or agreed to purchase this 250,000 acres from the government; the company was in the position of having made this contract for the purchase of 250,000 acres; and of having also contracted with the representatives of the railway company for the purchase of 450,000 acres of the railway land grant which they afterwards, I understand, increased by purchasing a considerable amount more: So they were in the position of going to work upon a very much larger scale, in a very much larger way, than they would have been able to do if they had only had the lands which they had purchased from the government.

Now, this subject has been discussed in the House before and much that the company did in the way of colonization work has been referred to. The first thing they did was to bring up an excursion from the south comprising about five hundred prominent and active men from the western states, business men, newspaper men, politicians, all men of influence in their respective localities. I have seen that our friends on the opposition side, in discussing this matter, have belittled the work that was done by this company in this way, viz., that they have sought to create the idea that this was a matter of no importance at all. They rather pooch-pooched the thing as hardly worth mentioning in connection with the operations of the company. Well, I venture to say to my honorable friends that if they had been in the same position as I was, if any one of them had been the minister of that department and had been spending thousands of dollars in an earnest and determined effort to arouse some interest in western Canada amongst the people of the western states, had been up against the difficulties which the Department of the Interior had been up against in connection with the work and had found it as arduous as we found it in the early years, they would not be inclined to belittle the effort that was made in bringing these people up from the United States. They would be inclined to think as I did because I regarded it as the beginning of the success of our immigration work, as the first indication that we had actually succeeded in attracting the attention of a class of men in the United States from whom information of a favourable character would spread through the whole of the rest of the population.

"Buncoed" by the Department?

Well, they did this work and as an illustration of how the times change and discussions change, and in view of the kind of criticism that has been addressed to the government during the present session respecting the making of this contract the House will be rather amused to hear that when the gentlemen who went upon this excursion were passing through Winnipeg, the Winnipeg people, being a hospitable people and always willing to take part in what is going on, put a few representatives on the train who went up with these bright American people and saw this country which the Americans were going up to see. When they came back did we find any criticism in the press of the city of Winnipeg upon the improvident and extravagant nature of the bargain which the government had made with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company in selling them 250,000 acres? On the contrary, in one of the papers in the city of Winnipeg, a paper not friendly to this government, and not especially favourable to me, the criticism that was made was that the Department of the Interior should be ashamed of itself for having buncoed these American people into taking land that was no good. That shows how things change. That was after the sale had taken place, after these excursionists had gone up there and after the land had been partially inspected.

Now, I want to cite a fact as evidence of the actual position of affairs at that time. When this Saskatchewan Valley Land Company undertook to carry on this work of colonization: the first thing that they found that they wanted and which they ought to get was some kind of railway accommodation upon the line of railway between Lumsden and the northern part of the tract. As I said, the railway company had been running trains, I think, tri-weekly pretty regularly for upwards of ten years and this is the fact to which I especially wish to call the attention of members of the House: When the colonization company asked the railway company to establish a station in this tract which they were going to colonize, what was the answer of the railway company? The railway company ought to know something about this land; they ought to know something about the tract and something about the prospects. Yet what did the railway company say? The railway company said that they would not put a station agent on that tract unless the colonization company paid the salary of the agent. It is an actual fact that after they got the railway company to

open a station and supply a station and telegraph agent during the first season the company had to pay the salary of this officer. Yet we are told that everybody knew that this was fertile land, that everybody knew that this was a place where there would be no trouble about settlement.

What further did the colonization company do? There was no hotel along that line or in that district. When a man got off the train he might just sit down beside the track.

Mr. TURRIFF. What railway company is running there?

Mr. SIFTON. The Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan, generally known as the Regina and Long Lake which as western people know was operated by the Canadian Pacific Railway at that time.

Company's Colonization Work.

Now, as I said, the position of affairs in that tract at that time was this: When a man got off the railway train he could sit on the track until the next railway train came on. There was no hotel and there was no way for him to find other accommodation. The colonization company came along and built a hotel and they did what I do not think has ever been done in Canada before as far as I know—they boarded everybody who came along free the first year. They did more. There was no way for people to get out on the land. So they built livery stables and supplied horses and men to drive people around and examine the land. They appointed salaried agents throughout the United States and at one time they had somewhere about 3,000 commission agents in different parts of the United States. In this way they went to work for the purpose of taking hold of this question and making a success of it.

There is one point that I want to advert to before I pass on from this subject and it is that when the question of the sale of this land was being discussed the question as to whether the department could safely encourage the settlement of this tract or not was one which was considered. One thing that the Department of the Interior has had to be extremely careful about has been the location of settlers and it has been extremely careful to preserve its reputation in reference to its reliability in pointing out the advantages of certain localities to settlers. Obviously the officers of the Department of the Interior or of

the government could not say that any particular district was no good. Officers of the government could not put themselves on record as decrying any particular section of the country, but what they could do and what they did do was not to actively encourage settlement in certain places where it was not considered by the department desirable to encourage settlement. In regard to this particular tract, when the question of sale was under discussion, this point was brought up and it was stated to the officers of the company that the government could not take the responsibility of bringing settlers through their own agents and advising them to go upon that land. The discussion proceeded somewhat on the part of the company in this way: They said: We do not expect you to do that and to be perfectly frank, we will tell you what our view is in regard to this land.

Brought in Settlers From U. S.

They said: Your people have not been able to make anything out of this land because the class of people who have been going up there have not been accustomed to deal with that kind of land. But, there are certain districts in the states south of the line where men have learned by experience how to cultivate that kind of land and they can make something out of it, and we are going to try to bring some of these men up. They said in addition: If they cannot make the land fit for growth of wheat it is likely that it can be successfully cultivated in the growing of flax in which these men also have had experience. Well, they have not found it necessary to try flax because they have been successful in growing wheat, but I want to say here, and it is just as true now as it was in 1902, that if men went on that land with the same views of agriculture that our farmers in Ontario have, and tried to put these views into practice, they never would be able to get a good crop. The men who have gone in there have farmed it after an entirely different fashion; they farmed it in the light of the experience they had in the semi-arid portions of the states whence most of them have come. After all there is a sensible reason at the back of this thing; it is a reason for what has happened and it is a reason which is well understood by those who take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the facts.

This company has done a very great and important colonization work; I need not detail the work they have done outside the tract in question, but I can say that it

has been a valuable aid towards colonization.

Beginning of Great Success.

I may remark also that so far as the members of this company are concerned they are not to be regarded as men who have come into this country to exploit the resources of the country for their own benefit, to do injury to the country, and then make off with the money. On the contrary, and I make the statement advisedly, the coming in of this company was the beginning of the great success of the immigration work in the west. It is not to be said that the company are responsible for that success; the company are a part of the results of the immigration policy of the government. These gentlemen came into that country because the officers of the Department of Immigration had been in the states where they lived and had been diffusing literature which pointed out the resources of our country; because our officers encouraged the movement of people to western Canada. These gentlemen thought the movement was going to continue; they thought the work of the immigration department was going to be successful, and they wanted to ally themselves with it; they wanted to make some money out of it if you will—and that is a proper ambition on the part of anybody; I may say it is the ambition which most people have when they go west.

Well, they have done the work I have spoken of; they have done it successfully. As I will point out in a little while they have not as yet quite fulfilled the terms of the contract but they have done a very great and a very valuable work. And since they have come to that country these gentlemen have taken the part of progressive citizens. They have taken all the money they have made out of this transaction, if they have made any; they have taken all the money they have made out of the land they purchased from other people and they have put it into business enterprises in western Canada, and they are amongst our most energetic and progressive citizens.

I want to call your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the excursion which was brought up by this company immediately after they set to work and to the fact that there were upon that excursion men who own the following properties in the tract that was sold: The Deitchen farm at Davidson which had a crop last year (1905) of 120,000 bushels of wheat; there is another farm at Davidson which had a crop of 40,000

bushels of wheat; there is the O'Grady farm at Hanley which had a crop of 30,000 bushels of wheat and there is the Wadell farm at Girvin which had a crop of 40,000 bushels of wheat. Another very successful man who came up on that first excursion was Mr. Mellicke who had a farm about 10 miles north of the tract, land purchased from this company, and last spring he had a nice little crop of 40,000 bushels of hard wheat. In going through this tract a year ago this month, I saw on that land which in the spring of the year 1902 was an absolute desert without anybody on it, without means of subsistence for man or beast; I saw in that tract last year, villages, elevators, stores, hotels, and the largest wheat field I ever saw in my life. That is the result of the operations of this company. I venture to say that presented to the ordinary business man he would say that this was a pretty fair business transaction on the part of the Interior Department. But there are some of our friends opposite who are not at all satisfied with it and they raise objections, and with your permission I shall deal very briefly with some of these objections.

Canada \$250,000 Ahead.

In the first place it is said—this emanates from the member for North Toronto—it is said we lost large sums of money by the sale which we made to these people. What are the facts? It is a sale of even numbered sections. In the case of even numbered sections we could do one of two things; we could hold them open for homesteads to the public or we could sell them. If we had kept them for homesteads they would not have been taken up for a good while under the conditions that existed; I doubt very much if they would have been taken up yet, I know a great many of them would not have been taken up. But if they had been taken up, the government of Canada would not have got one cent out of them. My hon. friend (Mr. Foster) would not suggest that we should sell them to speculators. Perish the thought. What should we do—put a price on them and offer them to settlers. Well, that is to say, we were going to ask people to pay money for land which we could not get them to take for nothing. Is that the proposition of the member for North Toronto? Now, what did we do? We did what was the sensible thing to do; we dealt with a company, we got a fair price as matters stood at that time, and we succeeded in putting it in the position that we would get the settlers and that we would get \$250,000 besides. We did

not lose a copper upon this transaction. On the contrary, when it is carried out to its conclusion the government of Canada will be \$250,000 ahead besides the settlers and besides the success of the operation.

The Settlers' Opinion.

Then it is said—this also from the member for North Toronto—that we piled up the price on the settler and handed over this land to a rapacious company; that the unfortunate settler had to pay dollar for dollar for one thing or another until the price was piled up upon him, and all because of the improvement policy of the government. Let us analyze that a little bit. First, there were twenty settlers on free homesteads in each township. We did not hurt them, the price was not piled up on them. Then, there were to be twelve settlers upon lands to be sold by the company. The company brought these people in and they showed them this land. There were millions upon millions of acres of land open for homestead entry, all around this tract; there were millions upon millions of acres of land for sale owned by railway companies all around this tract. These men came there, they looked upon the land, they had free homesteads all round them and railway lands to purchase but they decided to take these lands. I think we may let them look out for themselves. Nobody compelled them to buy that land and I do not think they are objects of charity. I am bound to say that men who can raise 40,000 bushels of wheat are hardly objects of charity. I do not know anybody in the agricultural business who is making more money than they are at the present time. They are doing well. I do not think they are objects of charity; therefore I do not think the House need worry itself or lose any sleep over the fact that the price was piled up on the unfortunate settler. Anyway, the settler ought to know himself, and we had an opportunity of finding out what he thought about it. We had an election in 1904 right in this district where these unfortunate settlers are located, and the government candidates polled two to one of all the votes polled in that district. That is their own opinion, and it seems to be that they are pretty well satisfied.

It is said that it was no trouble for the company to get settlers. This statement simply ignores the absolute facts as they are recorded beyond dispute. At the time the contract took place settlers stopped at the line on one side, and settlement commenced at the line on the other side.

U. S. Moneyed Men's Influence.

There is another charge made which looks a little insidious at first. It is said that this whole thing was bad policy—that it was not in the interest of the country, because this company took large tracts of this land and sold it in blocks of 5,000 or 10,000 acres to speculators in the United States. I want to say, having regard to the experience which I have had in connection with immigration work in the United States, that I do not think one single circumstance that ever happened has been of so much assistance, outside of the work of the immigration officers themselves, as the fact that a great number of moneyed men in the western states became interested in our northwestern lands. Any practical man can see at once how this operated. A farmer living outside of one of the small villages in the western states would feel like coming to Canada. He would go to the village and ask somebody about it. He would ask his local banker, who would naturally discourage him. What is the result of the moneyed men in those western states becoming interested in our northwestern lands? We do not find any more discouragement. They say to the western farmer: "It is a fine country; you had better go." It was a most material and distinct advantage, therefore, that large numbers of moneyed men in the western states became interested in our northwestern lands. They are a most important adjunct to the success of our immigration work.

The Only Alternative.

When we ask what the alternative is, when we are criticised for having made this contract, there is only one alternative that can be suggested. It is that we should have done nothing—that we should have let the matter stand just as it was. Now, I put the case to the House just as it appeared to me. We were settling the country to the south and to the north of this district. The people were going through it. The immigration officers reported that it was a tract of land which, as the hon. member for Winnipeg (Mr. Bole) stated to us last night of his own knowledge, was regarded as a by-word and reproach throughout that country. As a practical man, engaged in the duty of settling the western portion of Canada, when this question came before me, and practical men came along and said they were willing to undertake the work of removing the by-word and reproach, what was the sensible and reason-

able thing for me to do? I said: I may not have much faith in your project, but I will give you a chance to show what you can do. At any rate the government will be \$250,000 better off if you carry out the contract.

But, Mr. Speaker, the neatest objection that has ever been taken to this contract stands to the credit of the esteemed member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster). In a discussion which took place on this contract, the hon. gentleman was seized with a very strong degree of compassion for the unfortunate settlers who were brought in and settled upon these even-numbered sections, and he waxed somewhat eloquent over the grievances of those settlers. He regarded one particular circumstance as being the ground of a very serious grievance and a reason why the government should be severely censured; that was the fact that by making this contract they had put it in the power of the company to put settlers on the land, and what my hon. friend regarded as a very special grievance was the fact that the odd-numbered sections belonged to the colonization company. So that my hon. friend from North Toronto addresses this House in an attack upon this government for making this contract with the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company for the settlement of this tract because the odd-numbered sections belonged to the company. Mr. Speaker, I have said that I did not think my hon. friend from North Toronto was displaying very much courage in a certain connection. Perhaps there is a difference between nerve and courage, and, though I say, he lacks in courage, I would not be disposed to say that he also lacks nerve; for of all the colossal nerve that any man ever displayed in addressing an argument to a House full of intelligent men, that nerve is displayed by the hon. gentleman who makes the proposition that we are not to put settlers on the even-numbered sections because the odd-numbered sections are held by the company. Who gave them the odd-numbered sections? They got them from the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway Company, which got them from the government of the hon. gentleman. That is how they got them, and yet he stands up, in making an attack on this government, and tells the House that is a special point to be considered in connection with this outrageous and scandalous transaction, that the odd-numbered sections are owned by the company too.

Mr. Foster's Bitter Grief.

Well, it may be unfortunate, but I do not think we are to blame. What would my hon. friend do? Are we not to put any settlers into the Northwest at all? Because from one end to the other, throughout the fertile belt, the odd-numbered sections, thanks to these gentlemen opposite, are owned by a company? Look at his words in "Hansard" on this subject. Look at his words of bitter grief for the poor unfortunate settler put upon even-numbered sections with a rapacious company owning, the odd-numbered. What a shockingly bad government it was which brought about this state of affairs. But unfortunately for my hon. friend, he is the guilty man and not I. That is the kind of criticism to which we are subjected. I do not know what it was that happened to the hon. gentleman that made him indulge in this criticism, I do not know whether it was a case of his tongue getting beyond control and running away, or whether he was presuming upon the fact that I, who happened to know all the details of the transaction, was not here, and that possibly the others who were listening, and who did not know all the details, might think that there was something in the contract which gave the company the odd-numbered sections. And so, for the time being, some hon. members on this side may have thought he was making a most telling attack on the government for this infamous transaction it had carried out. That, Sir, is a fair sample of the criticism of the hon. gentleman and an illustration of the length to which his verbosity will carry him when he loses control of himself.

Perhaps I might stop here and leave this matter to the House on the record, but there is another point of which much has been made. I have nothing to conceal and am going to state exactly what happened. Much has been made of the charge—not that there has been anything wrong with the contract but that, after the company had done a considerable amount of work and made application to get a patent for the lands which they contracted to buy—they bought 150,000 acres of land from the government, having paid for it \$150,000—that they had not strictly and literally complied with the terms of their contract. The facts have been stated before, but as there have been times when the House was not paying much attention to Northwest matters, and the probability is that one-half the members have not the facts present to their minds, I may repeat them.

Mr. Turriff's Actions.

The application of the company came before the commissioner of Dominion Lands, and my hon. friend from East Assiniboia (Mr. Turriff) who was then the commissioner, dealt with it at the time in my absence. He knew that the company were fairly entitled to pay up for the 150,000 acres and get their patent. He knew what the company were doing. He knew what number of settlers they had brought in, as shown by the homestead returns and by the reports of the colonization agents. He had these reports before him and acted on them. In addition he knew settlement was going on vigorously and that the company had done very much more than was necessary to entitle them to the 150,000 acres. He therefore granted the order, they paid up the \$150,000 and got their patent. There can be no question about it to any one who knows the facts, that the company had done much more substantially than the amount of work which would entitle them to get this land, although possibly technically they were not within the four corners of the contract. Now my hon. friend the member for East Assiniboia, (Mr. Turriff), then commissioner of Dominion Lands, was examined in 1904 upon this transaction. There is nothing new about it. He went before the committee and the whole transaction was fully and minutely inquired into. And by the way my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) has complained bitterly at times that the late commissioner of Dominion Lands (Mr. Turriff) has never been visited with any condign punishment for the exercise of his judgment in connection with this transaction.

Well, the hon. member for East Assiniboia (Mr. Turriff) considered that he did exercise his judgment properly as commissioner, and was prepared to take the responsibility of what he did. And as regards the question of punishment, I may say that shortly afterwards my hon. friend (Mr. Turriff) resigned from the position of commissioner of Dominion Lands and received the honour of a nomination to this House by his fellow-citizens in the great and important district of East Assiniboia—one of the finest constituencies in the Dominion. My hon. friend went there, and in the election which followed, all the facts of his case were fully and completely discussed. He was attacked by his opponents upon the merits of this transaction as well as upon the record of this government. He was attacked on the ground of his personal action, as commissioner of Do-

minion lands, in connection with the issuing of the patent of this company. All I have to say is that the people of East Assiniboia—the people who are our masters, the men who send us here—elected him to this House by 800 of a majority. That fact, I venture to say, is one which should commend itself to the attention of my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster). I do not believe there is any one in this House who has a greater right to appreciate an endorsement of that kind for we all know what tribulations he has experienced in finding a constituency to elect him.

Was it an "Easy Contract?"

There is another argument made against us in connection with this company. They say that we made what, in common parlance, is described as an easy contract. That is to say we made a contract easy to fulfil. It was described by my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster) as a contract, the conditions of which there was no trouble at all in carrying out. All the company had to do was to take advantage of the inflow of settlers brought about by the agents of the government, go down and get their patents, sell the lands at \$6, \$7 or \$8 an acre, and put the money in their pockets. Let us see how that squares with the facts. We made this sale on the 24th May, 1902. It is admitted that the company has worked hard. Well, they have been working now for four years and with what result? Have they found this contract so easy a contract to carry out? Have they succeeded in carrying it out? Have they got the 250,000 acres of land? Why up to this day there are 100,000 acres which they have not been able to earn. That we have from the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver). But if the contract was such a soft and easy one, how is it that these active, keen, intelligent business men, equipped with an effective organization for the sale and settlement of lands, have not, in the four years since the contract was completed, been able to earn much more than one half? Evidently the conditions were more onerous than hon. gentlemen opposite would have us believe. Whether the company will be ever able to completely carry out the contract or not and get the remaining 100,000 acres I cannot say, but they have not been able to do it yet.

The People's Opinion.

My hon. friends do not appear to like this contract. I am a little surprised that they persist in discussing it. Why is it dragged up for discussion now? It was made in

1902; it was brought up and slightly discussed in this House in 1904. It was investigated before the Agriculture Committee of this House in 1904. In the general elections of 1904 it was one of the main subjects of discussion in the western country. In my constituency of Brandon the gentleman who opposed me and who stumped the constituency while I was absent (in other places, doing my best to attend to the interests of the Liberal party, made the Saskatchewan Valley Land transaction the main subject of discussion. When I came back after visiting other portions of the country I called a meeting in my own town of Brandon and before 4,000 people I discussed the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company contract with my opponent and my majority of 400 or 500 was an indication of what the people in the constituency of Brandon thought of the transaction when it was thoroughly explained. The hon. member for East Assiniboia (Mr. Turriff) who has been especially attacked in connection with this transaction comes back from a constituency in no wise a partisan constituency, not what can be called a strong Liberal constituency, with 800 majority. What happens in Humboldt? There my hon. friend (Mr. Adamson) who was one of the members of this company, was especially attacked in connection with this transaction. The tract of land to which this transaction relates was partly in the electoral district of Humboldt and my hon. friend's opponent lost his deposit. Another constituency containing a part of the tract in West Assiniboia was represented by the Hon. Walter Scott. The Saskatchewan Valley Land Company's transaction was discussed in 1904 in this House. Mr. Scott justified it. Mr. Scott went back for re-election to West Assiniboia and he was elected by 250 majority.

Mr. TURRIFF. Mr. Scott was elected by 800 majority.

Mr. SIFTON. I had forgotten; a few hundred do not make any difference. You take the results in the constituencies all around the country where this transaction took place, where the people know all about it. Why you can come down here 2,000 miles away and read books and reports and make up a story that this and that is the case, but, as a celebrated man said on one occasion: That may be a very fine speech but there is not much of it. But when you get to the place where the people know the facts you cannot fool them. In the constituencies all around that section the people did know the facts, and if you go there and talk to the average citi-

zen of that country and ask him what his views are in regard to this matter he will say: I do not care what the company sell the land for, I do not care how much money they make; they have settled the tract which was unsettled before, they have made a prosperous country where before there was no settlement and the transaction was a good transaction for the country—and the people voted that way when the elections were on.

The hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster), especially dislikes this contract. I am not going to discuss at any length the colonization company policy of the hon. gentleman and his colleagues in the late government.

Mr. FOSTER. Will the hon. gentleman point out to me in my speech where I made the argument that he has been developing for so long a time tonight with reference to the odd-numbered sections. I would like to look it up and see the context.

Mr. SIFTON. Unrevised "Hansard," page 1082, at the bottom of the page. I said that I was not going to discuss at any length the colonization policy of the late government and I do not propose to do so. It has, been referred to at considerable length in a previous discussion, there is a limit even to a good thing; and I do not propose to indulge in any particular discussion of it now, but I am going to call attention to one or two little particulars not in the way of general policy to which my hon. friend from North Toronto (Mr. Foster), when he gets through examining that odd-numbered section clause, might devote his attention.

The other day my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) made a reference to an article that had appeared in a French newspaper, and I wish to correct the misapprehension under which my hon. friends may possibly be labouring in respect to the short address he made on that occasion. It will be remembered that my hon. friend spoke to the House in a complaining way of the attack that had been made upon him in a newspaper. It is a very improper thing no doubt for a newspaper to attack any public man; and I have found it very uncomfortable myself at times, but I never asked my political opponents to pull them off. My hon. friend came here on Friday and addressed his appeal—I do not know whether it would be properly called an appeal to reason or not, but an appeal to compassion on the part of the Prime Min-

ister to get the French newspapers to leave him alone. What I was going to say was that there was no response on this side of the House when the hon. gentleman said he was unfairly villified. I am afraid my hon. friend misunderstands the fact that there was no response on this side of the House. Silence may mean a great many things. Sometimes it means assent; but I can assure my hon. friend that the dead silence that obtained on this side of the House when he made these few remarks was not due to assent. It was simply, Mr. Speaker, owing to the fact that every member upon this side of the House was simply speechless with astonishment, that the hon. gentleman of all men in the Dominion of Canada would have the nerve to get up and complain of a newspaper unfairly attacking him, the hon. gentleman who, as long as anybody can remember, has distinguished himself in Canada as the one man who, whenever he speaks about a political opponent, makes his reference just as venomous as it is possible to do.

Temperance Colonization Company.

I want to refer a matter to the hon. gentleman for consideration when he comes to speak on this question, as I hope he will in the course of time. On page 4162 of "Hansard" my hon. friend said this:

"They say in effect:"

Referring to the newspapers.

"What can you say of a man like Mr. Foster, who, as Minister of Finance, was guilty of exploiting public lands in the Temperance Colonization Company case and the Great West Land Company case?"

Then Mr. Foster says:

"Well, it ought to have occurred to 'Le Canada,' which is intelligent, if it did not occur to the gentleman who attacked me in this House, that as for the Temperance Colonization Company, it was formed, launched and had its existence before I was a member of the House, and not under my regime."

"It was formed, launched, and had its existence before he was a member of the House. Now if any gentleman will take the trouble to consult the "Parliamentary Companion," where members of this House are supposed to write all the distinguishing things about themselves they can think of, they will find that from a certain date in 1885 until 1896 my hon. friend, in the revised edition of the "Parliamentary Com-

panion," described himself as having been Finance Minister of Canada. It was rather a significant circumstance that my hon. friend did not think, when he was revising that article for the "Parliamentary Companion," of a little interregnum that occurred during the Bowell administration, he does not appear to have considered that matter worthy of his attention. The point is that my hon. friend was Minister of Finance upon the 21st day of April 1891, and as Minister of Finance he was chairman of the Treasury Board. And if hon. gentlemen will take the trouble to consult the record they will find that the Temperance Colonization Company was in the very liveliest kind of existence on the 21st day of April, 1891, when he was chairman of the Treasury Board, and Finance Minister of Canada; and they will find the statement I have just read from "Hansard" made by him is utterly and entirely inaccurate, to say the least of it. This Temperance Colonization Company got its settlement with the government of Canada by this order in council on the 21st day of April, 1891, the Hon. George E. Foster being then Minister of Finance, being chairman of the Treasury Board, being the watch-dog of the treasury; the man whose business it was to protect the treasury from being unduly and unfairly rifled.

A Sample Voucher.

Now, the hon. gentleman is great on vouchers. When he was talking about the North Atlantic Trading Company, it was not enough that a business organization should send in a voucher with an affidavit verifying the voucher. Perish the thought that the Temperance Colonization Company should do anything of that kind. The voucher which they sent in for \$78,000 is a simple statement of account, with items for thousands verified by a short affidavit of a gentleman who says this is a correct statement of account. For \$78,000 in a statement of account, that is all the evidence we have got. This is the same gentleman who comes along and says that when in a great business transaction, vouchers are presented and verified by affidavits, they should be looked upon with extreme suspicion. I do not know anything about the Temperance Colonization Company's business, or my hon. friend's connection with it, or whether he had any connection with it at all. His statement made in the House the other day looks very much as if he had at one time some connection with it. Perhaps he can explain how friendly a feeling he had for that company when this settlement was made. Cer-

tainly this settlement was beautifully and grandly liberal in its terms. There can be no question about that. I am not going into the details of it, because the Minister of the Interior gave the figures last night. But I wanted to call my hon. friend's attention to it, so that he might be more careful. Having been a man of experience and a long time in public life, when he gets up to make a statement about important matters in which his conduct has been called in question, it is desirable for him to be fairly accurate in his statement of facts.

Business Under old Government.

Now I want to call attention to another little matter that occurred as an illustration of the way that business may be done in connection with colonization companies. As I have said, my hon. friend's criticism about the odd-numbered sections was about the neatest thing in the way of criticism that I have heard; so I am bound to say that this order in council is about the neatest thing in the way of settlement that I ever saw. This order in council is not an order in council concerning the Temperance Colonization Company. There is a subterfuge in this order in council, but apparently in the other one they got pretty nearly everything that was in sight without any subterfuge.

This company, the Saskatchewan Land and Homestead Company, got a settlement with the late government by order in council, being one of those colonization companies which had entered into arrangements with the late government. There are a few things that I want to call attention to as an illustration of the kind of way that business may be done by a government, the kind of way that our friends, or their representatives, did business when they had an opportunity of doing it, and then perhaps when they talk of these things, they may be a little more charitable for the weakness of poor ordinary individuals on this side of the House. I find, Mr. Speaker, that when they made an agreement as to the number of settlers which should be allowed for it was carried out in this manner. The order in council says:

"The last official enumeration of the settlers in the company's 'Crescent Settlement,' consisting of the easterly nine townships of the company's tract, made by Mr. Rufus Stephenson, inspector of colonization companies, on the 18th of December, 1885, shows that there were within the said settlement 65 bona fide settlers placed therein since the date of the agreement,

and the company's manager, Mr. John T. Moore, furnishes the undersigned with the names of several other settlers placed within the said settlement since the date of Mr. Stephenson's enumeration, making 72 settlers in all for whom the company, on the basis approved by the order in council of the 30th instant, would be entitled to be credited with \$160 each, or a gross sum of \$11,520."

The list is made up by the company's agent furnishing the government with the names of several other men who were upon this tract. The government being a poor government, not having very much money, could not afford to send a colonization agent or an inspector to make the enumeration of the settlers, and so they agreed to take the statement of the company's agent, and they did take his statement as to the number of settlers who were placed there.

Then, Sir, there is another provision:

"The undersigned further finds that the agreement of the 19th September, 1882—"

That is the agreement which was made by this colonization company with the late government the agreement of September 19, 1882.

"—between the company and the government hereinbefore alluded to reserved out of all the townships named in the said agreement through which the North Saskatchewan river flows all the even-numbered sections."

A Charming Arrangement.

Just let me explain. The agreement comprises certain townships and the description of the townships the even-numbered sections through which the North Saskatchewan river flowed were expressly excepted from the land which was comprised within the colonization company's contract. They were left out; they were excepted. The even-numbered sections were never in the contract. They were not in the contract any more than the land on which the parliament buildings stand were in the contract. Please let that be noted. That is a point to be considered. These even-numbered sections were not in the contract. There was a clause in the contract, No. 10, I think it was, that provided—it was a beautiful clause too—that when even-numbered sections were withdrawn from the effect of the contract by the government the company was to be entitled to an allowance of \$160 per quarter-section for each one of the quarter-

sections that was withdrawn. Of course, that was a rather charming arrangement. If the government wanted to help out the company, they just had to withdraw a few of these even-numbered sections and as soon as they withdrew them, \$160 for each one was put to the credit of the company. But, Mr. Speaker, they were not satisfied with that. The even-numbered sections through which the North Saskatchewan river flowed were not in the contract at all and they could not be withdrawn. What does the order in council say?

"The undersigned further finds that the agreement of the 19th September, 1882, between the company and the government hereinbefore alluded to reserved out of all the townships named in the said agreement through which the North Saskatchewan river flows, all even-numbered sections, the said reserve being made under the provisions of clause 10 of the agreement, and he further finds that it is provided by the said agreement that if a section of land be withdrawn from the operation thereof pursuant to the provisions of the said clause 10, such section shall for the purposes of the rebate of purchase money to be made to the company be treated as having been settled by them in accordance with the terms of the said agreement."

They took the land which was never within the contract at all, they recited the fact that it was withdrawn under section 10 and they allowed the company \$20,000 for withdrawing it. Of course, the statement in the order in council is an absolute falsehood. A child of ten years old could read the papers and see that the statement is an absolute falsehood. I have mentioned this not for the purpose of discussing the colonization policy of my hon. friends opposite, but just to show the kind of contract that my hon. friend from North Toronto likes.

Some General Observations.

I have, I fear, Mr. Speaker, taken up too much time—

Some hon. MEMBERS. Go on.

Mr. SIFTON—on these questions, but if I may be permitted to speak for a little while longer there are a few general observations I wish to make even at the expense possibly of repeating what has been said before, and perhaps better said by hon. members on this side of the House. My excuse for doing so is the fact that being responsible for the conduct of the department during a great many years and that

conduct having been attacked it seems desirable for me to put the action of the government before the House somewhat in the light in which it comes before my mind, I having transacted the business.

We are brought up before a general attack upon the Department of the Interior and upon its management of the affairs of the west during the last ten years. We have all kinds of attacks. We have hon. gentlemen getting up on the other side of the House and saying that we did not settle up the land grants, that we did not settle up this transaction, that we did not settle up that transaction. Why did you not move faster? Why did you not do this? Why did you not do that? I desire this House to seize itself for a moment or two of the kind of problem that presented itself to me as Minister of the Interior when I was sworn into office in the fall of 1896. Sir, the problem that presented itself to me at that time was this: From the international boundary line to nearly 100 miles north of Edmonton, from the boundary of Manitoba to the Rocky mountains the whole fertile belt was locked up in railway reserves. As my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) pointed out last night the late government had provided for something in the neighbourhood of 40,000,000 acres to be earned by railway companies. There has, as an actual fact, been earned by the railway companies over 30,000,000 acres of land granted to them by these hon. gentlemen after deducting some 6,970,000 acres that were purchased back from the Canadian Pacific Railway.

It is said by way of excuse that it was necessary to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, and that both parties were committed to building the Canadian Pacific Railway out of the lands of the Northwest. If you leave aside the land granted to the Canadian Pacific Railway 12,000,000 acres of fertile land have been earned in the Northwest out of grants made by these gentlemen. And note well, Mr. Speaker, that these gentlemen—and let them not get away from this fact—never stopped giving land grants in the Northwest until the land ran out and not until then. That is the position which they took. It is nothing to their credit that it has turned out since that there are great quantities of land that have not been taken up by railways. They were covered by reserves for railways, and when I took office, in so far as every tract of land in the whole Northwest which was considered to be fairly fit

for settlement is concerned, it was covered with reservations of some kind in favour of railway companies. That was the position in which we found the affairs of the country at that time. Now, Sir, what was the conclusion at which they had arrived in carrying out their policy? They had commenced to build the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1881, they had begun to administer the land system, they had carried on an alleged immigration system and they had given lands out of which 30,000,000 acres have been earned since then by railway companies and what was the net result? The net result was that in all that vast country included in Manitoba and the Northwest there were only some 200,000 or 300,000 people altogether in 1896. What was the general position of the country? The Canadian Pacific Railway, a railway that depended largely for its traffic at that time upon the traffic of the western country, passed its dividend in 1896 and the stock of the railway went down to about 50. What about the other railways? The Manitoba and Northwest Railway was bankrupt, the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan was bankrupt, the Calgary and Edmonton was only kept alive by the Canadian Pacific Railway operating it and the Northern Pacific of Manitoba never paid a dividend. That was the position of affairs, and I say that a more fatuous policy, a more lamentable failure, a more hopeless legacy to leave to their successors in office could never have been devised or thought of.

That is the problem that met this government in 1896 when it took office. One would have thought that the Conservative government having given these lands to railway companies, would get to work and try to put their policy into some kind of business like shape and help the country to get along. But not a bit of it. With respect to something like 25,000,000 acres of land that was fully earned at a time long before the change of government took place—by far the greater portion of it earned in 1885 and I think all of it earned four or five years before the change of government—what had these gentlemen done? Out of that vast quantity of land only 1,825,433 acres had been patented. A vast proportion of that land had not been selected, and nothing had been done in any shape, form or manner to carry on the business which was entrusted to that great department. The Minister of the Interior showed last night what were the reasons for this. He showed that it was to enable the railway companies to avoid taxation.

Settlers' Protection the Last Thing.

I do not mention that for the purpose of making any attack on the railway companies for they were simply trying to get the best terms they could from the government. But I point to it as another indication of what was going on, and that the very last thing which these gentlemen, who now talk about the woes of the settler; the very last thing they thought of when in office was protecting the interests of the settlers against the corporations. That will explain how it is that year after year passed and that a miserable 1,800,000 acres of land was patented out of a total of 25,000,000 acres. The Liberal government took hold of that question and what has been done? This has been done: Since the change of government in 1896, 22,478,013 acres of that land have been patented. The Canadian Pacific Railway land grant has been wholly and entirely selected and all patented except a comparatively small portion. And the patenting of the balance is proceeding as rapidly as it can be done. As to all the others they are disposed of with the exception of these which I shall mention—and I must apologize to the Minister of the Interior for going into this point, but it has connection with my argument and I hope he will excuse me for referring to it.

The Manitoba Southeastern Railway Company is one which has not been fully settled, but I point out to the House that that is no reflection upon the department and it is not doing anybody any harm. There is a question which has to be settled in connection with the land which was set apart for the Manitoba Southeastern Company; it was fixed in a certain locality; it is probable that a considerable proportion of it may be swamp land belonging to the province of Manitoba, and in any event the land which the railway company is entitled to will only be the land within that reservation, so that nobody is being hurt by the delay and it is not land that would be likely to be settled soon. There is the Qu'Appelle Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway, and as the Minister of the Interior said, there is one half million acres of land to be selected and patented for it, and I imagine that can be done without any difficulty in the course of the present year.

The Canadian Northern.

Now as to the Canadian Northern Railway Company, I have heard long arguments addressed to this House upon the subject of the grants to this company, and

suggestions have been made that some kind of concessions are granted to the Saskatchewan Valley and Manitoba Land Company, or some other company under some such name as that. So far as I know, at the time I left office—I think I am safe in saying that the same is true since my hon. friend (Mr. Oliver) took office—the Department of the Interior never had made any concession of any kind to any Saskatchewan Valley Land Company except as to the tract which I have discussed fully tonight. The Saskatchewan Valley and Manitoba Land Company are I believe the selling agents of the Canadian Northern Railway Company, and the Canadian Northern Railway Company has had dealings with the department respecting its land grant. There is no use of getting these things mixed up and trying to create the impression that the government is giving concessions to a land company when such is not the case. The government has dealt with the Canadian Northern Railway Company to the best of its ability and under order in council the Canadian Northern Railway was bound to make all its selections prior to the 31st of December, 1905, and in respect to any land which was not selected at that date all the reservations in respect of that land earned by the railway company have lapsed, and there are no reservations of any kind whatever in respect to that portion of the land grant.

Vast Problem Disposed of.

Therefore at the present time, this whole vast problem which was bequeathed to us in 1896 has been practically disposed of with the exceptions to which I have alluded; namely the half million acres to the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway Company; the land coming to the Canadian Northern Railway which they have earned but in respect to which they have no reservation because they have not selected it within the time the order in council allows, and whatever land the government may be compelled to give to the Canadian Northern Railway in respect to land it may earn in the future under the terms of the contract for a land grant, which was given by the late government and renewed by this government from time to time. So that, providing for the liability in respect to the Canadian Northern Railway which may arise from future construction, the government is in the position that with ordinary diligence on the part of the officers of the Interior Department, in ten months or a year from this date they will be able to say that this whole

question has been absolutely and completely settled, and they will be in a position then to declare a policy in respect to the whole vast tract of odd-numbered sections from one end of the Northwest territories to the other.

I do not think it lies in the mouth of anybody—least of all does it lie in the mouths of my hon. friends on the other side—to say that the government has been lax or derelict in their duty, or that it has been unbusinesslike, or, that it has in any respect failed to show diligence in dealing with this question of railway land grants which was left to them by the Conservative government in an absolute tangle. Upon the question of the land grants we have a record which we may fairly say is a business-like one. We have practically cleared off all the slate.

We are told now by my hon. friends, opposite that we are to blame on account of the administration of the homestead law. That is a point which these gentlemen are urging before the House, but if we may judge from what has happened in the Northwest Territories during the last year and a half whenever the people got a chance of expressing their opinion, these gentlemen opposite have not been able to urge it with any great effect upon the minds of the western people. I want to say a word or two in regard to the administration of the homestead law. I had it under my charge for a good many years, and without assuming any extraordinary amount of knowledge or ability I think I may fairly say that I have a reasonably good knowledge of the difficulties which arise in connection with the administration of that law.

Studying the West.

When I started as little more than a boy to practise law, I commenced in a town where the whole country surrounding was filled with homesteads newly taken up. The various difficulties and questions in connection with the homestead law, and the trials and troubles of the settlers, were matters of everyday talk and discussion by the legal men of that town. It would have been impossible for anybody who lived under these conditions to avoid complete familiarity with the subject. For many years, during the whole time that I was in the province of Manitoba, I had every opportunity of becoming very familiar with the whole question of the administration of the homestead law. When I took charge of the Department of the Interior, I had

the assistance of the late deputy, Mr. James A. Smart, a man who had held the highest position in the gift of his fellow-citizens in the province of Manitoba, a man—and I take special pleasure in saying it in view of the attacks recently made upon him—of the most unimpeachable integrity, a man who in every respect stands above reproach or suspicion. I would feel that I was derelict in my duty if I failed to make that statement on the floor of this House. Mr. Smart came here with the highest respect of his fellow-citizens of the province of Manitoba. Whether any man agrees with his political opinions or not is not to the point; but if you ask any man familiar with public affairs in Manitoba he will testify that Mr. Smart was regarded by his fellow-citizens there as a man of the highest business capacity and of absolute integrity. He was as familiar as I was with the administration of the homestead law.

Later on I had the advice and assistance of my hon. friend the present member for Eastern Assiniboia (Mr. Turriff). My hon. friend lived in the Northwest for years; he was in public life there; he knew everything about the difficulties and troubles of the pioneers, and was thoroughly acquainted with the administration of the land law as it affected the settlers. He appeared to be the right kind of man to take charge of the administration of the law and the application of the rules of the department in regard to the settlers. He was the man who had the principal work to do in connection with the actual direction of affairs while connected with the department. So that I think we may claim that we are entitled to a reasonable degree of confidence, and that we know a little more about the difficulties of administering the homestead law than some of our honourable friends who have lately taken a trip of two or three weeks to the Northwest.

The Homestead Law.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is not and never will be a department of the government whose affairs it is more difficult to administer than the Department of the Interior in regard to the homestead law as it exists and as it is applied to the settlers in the western country; and why is it? It is for this reason. When you are dealing with the business of any other department, you are dealing with a business which most men understand. You are dealing with men who understand the business in hand. In the Department of the Interior you are dealing with men who do not understand the business, who do not

keep the letters they receive, who forget to take the most ordinary precautions; and it is generally the honest fellow who gets into trouble, and it is the honest, well-meaning man that the department must protect, even at the expense of being very often imposed on by those who are neither honest nor well-meaning.

So long as there is a homestead law in this country, the government will be to some extent imposed upon in connection with the administration of that law; it is absolutely impossible that it can be otherwise, and you will not cause the department to be less imposed upon by attempting to apply any automatic rule in carrying on the operation of the department. If the hon. member for Winnipeg (Mr. Bole) had not made the remark, I would have been disposed to make it, in speaking of the idea advanced on the other side of the House, that there ought to be some fixed, automatic rule in connection with the carrying out of the homestead laws as applied to settlers. The whole trend of the argument on the other side of the House is this, that the minister must not have any discretion, the officers of the department must not have any discretion; but you should have some fixed, automatic rule which under certain circumstances would close men out of their homestead right. There is to be no humanity about the administration of the law—no means of looking into the case and exercising discretion as to whether the man should be shut out of his homestead right or not. I venture to say, as the hon. member for Winnipeg did, that any man who becomes the minister of that department and undertakes to adopt such a rule and carry it out, had better never go west of Lake Superior, for there would be serious doubts about his ever coming back again alive. Consider what the facts of the case are. You have to deal with thousands of men, many of them unable to understand or to carry out the rules explained to them by the officers of the department. A man forgets the date, or puts a notice in his pocket and loses it. Many things of this kind occur. It is impossible to have a fixed rule laid down, that without giving a man a hearing would compel you to take away his homestead right. Why, Sir, the thing is unthinkable; it is absurd.

Former Conditions.

Our hon. friends on the other side of the House, during their term of office, though there was not much to be said for their administration of the homestead law, did

not attempt to apply such a rule as that. What they did do was this. They carried the principle too far. They employed in the department men who did not understand the conditions of the country.

What happened? So long as there was an open vote in the Northwest Territories, a Liberal had not a chance of being elected—why? There is no need to ask why. The officials of the government stood there, and if a man was known to be an opponent of the government, he stood in danger. I do not say that all the officials of the government acted in that way; but he stood in danger of the officials undertaking to say that he had failed in the performance of homestead duties. You could not elect a Liberal under these circumstances; we were in a hopeless position. We were in that position for two reasons. First because we were in a minority of about one Liberal to two Conservatives in those ridings. Another reason was that the vote was open and the people could not vote as they chose. But what happened when they got the ballot? Let my hon. friend the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) speak. In 1896 they elected him by from 700 to 800 majority. And he was elected because of the inefficient land administration of my hon. friends on the other side. My hon. friend the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver), then editor of the Edmonton "Bulletin," was known as an independent hostile critic—not a strong party man—but a vigorous opponent of the land administration of the Northwest. He was returned by 700 of a majority. What happened in East Assiniboia? Senator Douglas was elected by 1,000 majority in a constituency known as Conservative. Saskatchewan elected a Liberal. In West Assiniboia, the late Mr. Davin, an able campaigner, a man who devoted his whole life to looking after his constituency and who had the whole official vote and influence behind him, only managed to get in by the casting vote of the returning officer, and he never got in again.

Where are the Grievances now?

What happened after we got into office? So far as the administration of the homestead law was concerned, my whole available time, during the first two years of my official experience, was taken up looking into the grievances of the previous years which had not been redressed. And if they had not been redressed, it was not because the officials did not intend to redress them, but because the system was wholly inefficient. I ask any member to look back over the last year before I left office and I want

him to say, if he can, how many grievances under the Land Act he had to bring before my attention during that year. I do not remember of one brought to my personal attention by a member of parliament except one which the Minister of the Interior (Mr. Oliver) brought up, and that was due to the forgetfulness or the mistake of a land agent, not appointed by me, but by the late government. The same may be said of every part of that country. The complaints which were numerous, which were incessant, which dominated the whole country in 1896, are non-existent at present. In 1900, I stumped the whole of that western country in the interests of the Liberal party. And I want to say to members of this House, who have heard a great deal of talk this session about the grievances of homesteaders, that in that whole trip I only heard of one single case brought before a public meeting in which a grievance was alleged with regard to the administration of the land law. And that related to a trifling matter about a little piece of school land. In 1904 I had the honour of addressing a large number of meetings in the interests of the Liberal party in that western country. With the exception of the discussion of the Saskatchewan Valley Land question, I do not remember of one single attack made at a public meeting on the administration of the land law.

But you may say, if I did not have complaints from the members on the government side, still there were complaints. Why then did not the gentlemen of the opposition bring them up?

I put myself in the judgment of the House when I say that during the eight years in which I had charge of the administration of the enormous land interests in our western Territories, these hon. gentlemen opposite, perfectly qualified to deal with these questions, especially men like my hon. friend from Marquette (Mr. Roche), found but two cases which they thought worthy of bringing to the attention of parliament.

A Triumphant Vindication.

Would it be possible for any one to have a more triumphant vindication of the administration of the department? There is no use in my hon. friends getting up now and saying there were lots of things that were not as they should have been. They know perfectly well that if any grievances were brought to their attention, they would not have hesitated laying them before parliament.

The Land for the Settler.

I want to cite a short version of the facts upon the question of the land for the settler, and I do not believe that when these facts are investigated, hon. gentlemen opposite will find them quite as palatable as they would wish. Some hon. gentlemen on the other side have sarcastically remarked that our policy of the land for the settler has not been carried out. Well, I want to cite two or three actual facts regarding the results, which I think will convince the House that these facts bear out the policy which we claim to be ours. Hon. gentlemen opposite voted corporations lands which have since been earned, and I take no account of what may still be earned—amounting to 30,622,444 acres. They disposed of lands otherwise than to settlers in such a way as to bring the total up to 31,500,000 acres. The total amount of land which they gave in eighteen years to settlers for homesteads and pre-emption was about 8,500,000 acres. So that the result of their administration was that in 18 years they had given nearly 32,000,000 acres of land to corporations and speculators and had given less than 8,500,000 in all shapes and forms for homesteads and pre-emptions to settlers.

The record of the present government is this: in all shapes and forms in which we have disposed of lands otherwise than to the actual settlers, we may have disposed of in the neighbourhood of 2,000,000 acres of land. That includes 500,000 acres which were sold to the Irrigation Company that has not yet carried out its conditions and may not do so; for my part I hope it will, because I think it would be beneficial. That includes 250,000 acres sold to the Saskatchewan Valley Land Company of which they have earned only 150,000 acres. It includes all the land of the halfbreed scrip and a few other small sales that could not perhaps properly be called sales to individual settlers, so that we may charge ourselves on account of all these transactions with about 2,000,000 acres. But we have given to the actual settler and to the homesteader, in individual amounts of 160 acres or thereabouts in round figures 20,000,000 acres of land. I do not think it necessary to discuss at any length, I simply place these figures before the House as in my judgment conclusively vindicating the claim that this government carries out the policy of the land for the settler.

I do not wish to be unnecessarily offensive to my hon. friends on the other side of the House, but I do feel called upon to say,

that when they say they are not pleased with the land policy of the government during the last eight or nine years, when they say it is not a policy that appeals to them, when they say it is not a policy in accordance with their ideas, I am bound to say I think they are right; I am bound to say I think it is a policy which is very different from the policy of which they showed they were in favour when they were in power, and I would go further than that and say that the very farthest thing from my intention, the very farthest thing from my desire was to initiate and carry on a policy which would be in accord with the sentiments which hon. gentlemen crystallized into action when they were in power. The policy of the government was not framed for the purpose of pleasing our hon. friends on the opposition side of the House. The policy of the government was carried on so far as the land system is concerned for the purpose in the first place of promoting the prosperity of the western country and in the next place of promoting the prosperity of the whole people of Canada; and in the third place of pleasing the people of Western Canada, with whom we had to deal. These were the objects we had in view, and I will leave it to the unprejudiced opinion of Canada and to the opinion of this House, representing as it does the constituencies of Canada, whether the policy of the government with respect to the land system during the time I was in charge of that department has been such a policy as has conduced to the interest and to the development of the Northwest and to the development of the whole of Canada.

Conclusive Evidence.

As to the other question, as to whether it has suited the people of the Northwest, the evidence upon that point may, I think, be regarded as sufficiently conclusive. When the Northwest was originally settled it was settled largely by Conservative people. Every one familiar with the circumstances there knows that in the early days the population was strongly Conservative. Liberals were very few and far between. When we got into power in 1896, this was the position of affairs. We were on trial before the people, we were on trial before a population that was largely, from party predilections, hostile to us and to our political views. So strong was the view that our hon. friends opposite entertained in regard to the strong Conservative predilections of the people of the Northwest, that you will all remember how very strong was the declaration of opinion that came from

the venerable leader of the Conservative party, Sir Charles Tupper, and from many of his lieutenants, that when the election of 1900 came along there would not be one Liberal seat west of Lake Superior, and as for myself I was to be buried in eternal oblivion. That was the prediction made by every Conservative from their leader down. What happened? That did not happen which the hon. gentleman predicted. We went to the country and found that we received a strong support at the hands of the people of the Northwest particularly. The Northwest Territories returned I think four supporters of the government. We went on longer and in 1904, we again appealed to the people. When anybody says that there is any way of influencing the people of the Northwest except as they see fit to vote, he thereby shows his total inability to understand the atmosphere of that country. The result was unprecedented from one end of the western country to the other; we had a magnificent support given to us by the people of that country, the people with whom the Department of the Interior has been dealing for the last eight years.

I am not making these statements for the purpose of making a stump speech, or for the purpose of jubilating over hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House. Not at all; I am pointing out these facts for the purpose of showing to the hon. gentlemen who come here and who say that the Northwest is seething with discontent about the administration of the homestead laws,—I am coming here and making these statements to show that the men who are living in that western country who are dealing with the land department, who are every day in familiar relations with the circumstances of the cases to which these hon. gentlemen refer, that these people have overwhelmingly given their endorsement to the administration of the affairs by this government.

Sir, I can only say in conclusion, that while I am conscious—nobody can be more conscious than I am—of the many defects and weaknesses of the administration for which I was responsible, still I am bound to say that I do not come here before the House to apologize for any of the matters to which my hon. friends on the other side of the House have referred. I have given my version of the matter as it has appeared to me; I have placed the facts before the House to the best of my ability, and I shall be content when the history of this country shall be written to have the history of the last eight or nine years, so far as western administration is concerned, entered opposite my name.

